



Service Employees International Union Local 503

72,000 public services workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.

To: Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health, and Recovery

On: February 3, 2022

Re: Senate Bill 1548 Testimony: Agency with Choice

Senator Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Alice Longley Miller and I work for SEIU Local 503 as a long-term care policy strategist. I am here today to testify in favor of Senate Bill 1548. This bill is really an omnibus bill intended to address emergent needs across Oregon's Home and Community Based Care System that cannot wait until 2023, and we are grateful to this committee and Senator Gelser Blouin for bringing this forward.

SB 1548 defines and sets minimum standards for a new provider type in Oregon called "Agency with Choice," an approach to providing care and support services that gives consumers the autonomy to fully direct their services while not needing to serve as the employer of record for a worker. The bill also directs the Department of Human Services to adopt rules related to these agencies, including defining minimum qualifications and ensuring fiscal transparency in the provision of these community-based services, so that individuals receive high quality services that are fiscally sound.

Defining these providers should be a priority for our state to ensure and enforce quality as our community-based system grows. By defining Agency with Choice as a service in Oregon, we can begin to prioritize key factors such as:

- improving wages;
- strengthening Agency responsibilities around self-direction and working with consumers to direct their own service plan;
- ensuring Agencies are responsible for training workers and ensuring background checks are completed;
- enacting standards around worker and consumer protections and ensuring it's clear who is liable and accountable when issues arise.

SB 1548 also implements transparency requirements for community-based services related to a bill we supported last session, SB 703, that will be important for better understanding staffing levels and the connection between worker wages and staffing. This will promote good employment practices in Oregon, which is good for workers and consumers alike.

SB 1548 also requires that ODHS report back to the legislature on consumer-directed employment service models. We are hopeful that this report will help Oregon navigate the support staff landscape. There are unanswered questions about the best path forward to improve aging and disability services, promote self-determination of those in services, and create a strong workforce to support the growing need for community-based supports.

Oregon should do her homework now and put in the work through research and working with stakeholders to build a service system that prioritizes workforce development,

quality service delivery, and aligns with our shared commitment to self-determination and good outcomes for those receiving care.

This bill also fixes an important issue relevant to SEIU member providers in Adult Foster Home (AFH), which is the new requirement for AFH facilities to install sprinkler systems. The fix will delay implementation of the sprinkler system requirement in order to give the agencies impacted by this change, including ODDS, APD, and providers time to comply.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1548, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Alice Longley Miller
SEIU Local 503