

Testimony on Certification and Registry February 3, 2022

Good morning, Chair Gelser Bluein, Vice Chair Anderson
and Members of the Committee.

My name is Jewel Nelson and I live in Eugene. My mom Eve has been a resident of a memory care facility in Springfield since 2019.

I support **Senate Bill #1556** to create a certification and public registry for caregivers.

I am very familiar with the problem of critical staffing shortages, as I have personally witnessed a revolving door of caregivers at this Springfield facility for several years.

I respect, value and rely on these dedicated workers, who perform all manner of physically intimate and emotionally demanding care for my mom, 24 hours a day.

Unfortunately, my experience is that the training requirements to do this work are not always met. I will cite just two examples.

When my mom moved in, she had a broken shoulder. Management assured me that the care givers were properly trained and knew how to help her use a transfer pole that I had installed.

In fact, most had no training with this at all. One by one, I ended up demonstrating how to use the pole to help my mom maneuver into and out of her bed. Inevitably, a care partner would lean over and whisper a furtive “thank you, I had no idea!”

Another example is that many times, my mom who has celiac disease and can't digest gluten, was given cookies, bran muffins or granola bars. She would inevitably have severe cramps and I'd find her bent in her wheelchair holding her stomach in pain.

This suffering was absolutely avoidable, had management invested the time and made proper training and support of their care workers, a priority.

I heard from many of the caregivers that they were just told, “the resident care plans are over there.” No guidance, explanations, training or follow up.

A public registry would provide transparency for families to verify that both home, and corporate facilities have a properly trained workforce.

A registry that certifies the completion of a checklist of training in important skills and meaningful qualifications, accomplishes several important things.

First, it would enable families to verify the records of training, background checks, credentials and certification of the caregivers.

Second, it would help a worker to build their resume for a career path in this important field. It would enhance a sense of accomplishment, pride and ownership for a caregiver, possibly increasing retention by facilities that invest in them.

I'm sure any of us who has a certificate or a degree indicating accomplishments we have achieved, takes pride in that piece of paper in our files or on our walls.

Hair stylists, doctors, auto mechanics and the groomers at Petsmart who cut your dogs' toenails, all have plaques certifying that they have the proper training and qualifications to do the jobs that we hire them to do.

In that light, I certainly think it is essential that all families be able to verify the background checks, training and qualifications of the caregivers who handle, bathe, feed and care for our mothers and fathers behind closed doors.

To add teeth to this bill and assure accountability by facilities, it would be critical to have a system of verification in place.

If an employer misrepresents or falsifies records of training for their workers, they should be subject to meaningful penalties and fines, which would be part of their public record.

I urge you to vote in favor of creating a certification and registry for home and facility-based caregivers.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue.