



UCP Connections

305 NE 102nd Ave Suite 100
Portland OR 97220

March 14, 2023

To: Senate committee on Human Services

Re: Support for SB602

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Robinson, and members of the committee

My name is Glenna Hayes and I am the advocacy and outreach coordinator for both UCP Connections and Mentors. I work closely with staff and self-advocates in the community who rely on long term supports in a variety of ways. UCP Connections and Mentors support roughly 900 individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. We are writing in today in support of SB602.

While we are just one agency the provider crisis is impacting many in our community. Leaving some without care for months, some even having to move to another state or into group/foster homes to get their needs met. Some folks I have personally known have even opted to stop taking life-necessary medication due to the burden of finding and retaining adequate supports which resulted in their death.

The inability of the current long term care provider system(s) to generate an adequate workforce to meet the needs of our community has to be addressed. There is no official wait list for supports and services but there are people waiting months, and some even years to find providers to not only live but thrive in their lives. We hope that when this board is developed people who receive supports are included in every step of the way because this ultimately impacts their lives, for their whole life. We need to have a collaborative discussion within this



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wage board between those needing, those providing, and those paying for the supports so we can build something sustainable. While many people think of supports and services are for folks who are elders or with physical disabilities, that is not the only demographic long term care providers work with. Supports and services are provided to a variety of folks from children to older adults with a large variety of disabilities, neurodiversity, and mental health needs. So how are we going to address and build something that people can rely on to be set up for success in life and allow them to age with grace and dignity? We believe a long term care wage board is a piece to this.

I want to highlight some lived experiences of those who rely on long term care providers.

- In September 2021, one of K's customers underwent a procedure which will require them to use a G-Tube for eating and drinking. As of March 2023, they have not been able to find a provider capable of supporting that customer due to their medical needs. Instead, their family has relied on watching Youtube videos to learn how to use the Gtube to ensure the customer is able to consume enough calories to survive.
- In Spring 2022, a customer joined the brokerage and started working with Z to find supports to help him transfer in and out of bed. Outside of transfers and bathing, he is extremely independent and held a full time job at Home Depot. He needed approximately 4 hours of support each day split across 2 shifts. He left brokerage services in February 2023 to live with family in Idaho because we were unable to find any personal support



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workers or any agency able to fill such short shifts on a regular basis. When we inquired about whether Supported Living might be an option we were told he was not a good fit. We were specifically told finding staff to meet his needs was not tenable.

- E the bi-lingual Personal Agent Liaison for UCP Connections, reports that finding providers who speak Spanish for his Spanish speaking customers is extremely difficult, particularly when seeking employment supports. The same is true for our community members whose first language is ASL, Vietnamese or Russian.

- Aaron was a young individual who I worked with and knew through an assisted living facility. At this facility Aaron was not getting any supports with community engagement, socializing or getting out of his apartment much. The staff there could only provide supports in the facility around activities of daily living like eating, bathing, transferring. Aaron decided that he wanted to remain living at the facility but hiring his own staff through a different program. Aaron needed 24/7 supports due to his physical and mental health needs. This was extremely difficult to find multiple providers as he needs of a dual diagnosis of a physical disability and mental health. This is not something providers are paid or trained adequately for. Eventually Aaron got MERSA from the facility and ended up in the hospital. He went into a deep depression and eventually decided to stop taking all of his life and infection needed medication resulting in his death. While this may seem like an extreme situation for some, it is a



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constant fear and reality many people who need supports are living right now.

There are not enough providers to meet the needs of this community and we need to start taking steps to address this. The wage increases that have been done are not keeping up with the need of our providers to build something strong, impactful and sustainable for people with disabilities. We hope you pass SB 602 so we can start taking actionable steps to help this community thrive.

Sincerely,

Glenna Hayes

Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator of UCP Connections & UCP Mentors