



Prestige Care, Inc.

March 23, 2023

Honorable Senator Campos, Co-Chair
Honorable Representative Valderrama, Co-Chair
Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 5525 – Support for the Essential Worker Health Care Trust

On behalf of Prestige Care, I'm gladly reaching out to share the overwhelmingly positive impact the Essential Workers Healthcare Trust (EWHT) plan has had across our 18 skilled nursing centers in Oregon. Since the introduction of the trust plan, we have consistently received praise from our team members located throughout the state.

Prestige is a family-owned skilled nursing and senior care organization operating in eight states in the Western U.S. We are proud to serve more than 4,000 patients, residents, and their families across our footprint of more than 70 skilled nursing centers, assisted living and independent living communities, delivering high-quality care from our compassionate caregivers and staff.

Like many healthcare providers in the state, throughout the region and across the nation, Prestige Care has faced staffing challenges among our skilled nursing roles, including certified nursing assistants and licensed nurses. While there's no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profoundly detrimental impact on staffing, our industry has long faced workforce challenges that pre-date COVID-19 for a myriad of reasons including gaps in funding, regulatory requirements, high turnover and burn-out, among others.

Since its launch, the Essential Workers Healthcare Trust plan has been a game-changer in improving our ability to attract new employees and retain our highly trained staff, by offering competitive compensation packages that include robust benefits.

On the recruiting side, we will often share the benefits afforded to us through the trust before discussing wages with applicants. Team members have shared with us that during their interviews, this helped to make their wages even more desirable because of the low cost involved in the benefits that we offer.

Not only has the trust plan helped entice potential new hires, but it has also upheld employee retention as well. We have had many employees reach out to our administrators to explain individual circumstances in which the trust plan has been the deciding factor in staying with Prestige, despite opportunities to work elsewhere. From affordable prescription medications to accessible options for specialized care such as diabetes, our employees have had nothing but positive things to say about their trust plan healthcare benefits. In fact, we have had multiple former team members return to work with us after learning about the trust plan.



Prestige Care, Inc.

Since the introduction of the trust plan, employee morale has also improved. Staff are visibly more engaged in their work and feel that they are being afforded the benefits they deserve for their dedication to a field that can be emotionally taxing. One employee shared that trust plan benefits have made them feel cared for in a way they hadn't experienced in the healthcare industry before.

Overwhelmingly, the benefit of offering our staff affordable and decent healthcare has been one of the greatest impacts on our workforce that we have ever seen. Team members are seeing doctors that they haven't been in to see for years because they previously couldn't afford the co-pay. This allows our employees to care for their health, get the medications they need and have less stress in their lives.

We cannot overstate the positive impact the Essential Workers Healthcare Trust has had on our industry and organization, and we urge the Legislature and Subcommittee on Human Services to include \$30 million in funding for the 2023-2025 biennium, which will draw down significant federal Medicaid match and allow this meaningful program to continue serving workers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide insight into our experience, and for your advocacy on behalf of organizations like ours and families across Oregon state.

Sincerely,

Megan Sarvela
Director of Human Resources
Prestige Care, Inc.