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On Behalf Of: Homecare Local 99 SEIU503
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

2023 Ways & Means Roadshow Testimony-Roseburg

My name is Jolene White, from Grants Pass, Josephine County. I have been a homecare worker for over nine years. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

When I show up at work, I want you to know, I'm really doing your work. Collectively, one of the main goals of the legislature is to serve citizens by reallocating citizen contributions (taxes) in creating infrastructure and programs to provide services. One such service is operating care provider programs to care for low-income vulnerable members of Oregon's population, who need assistance in day-to-day activities just to manage to live in their homes. Homecare workers (HCW), personal support workers (PSW) and personal care attendants (PCA) are the proud folks who do this selfless work. We change lives and even save lives.

SEIU503 has worked diligently to grow and maintain a strong and positive relationship with many of our elected officials, working side-by-side to create a better Oregon. Over the past twenty years, both union members and staff have worked with representatives of ODHS, ODDS and OHCC trying to fix the broken systems that facilitate the programs which authorize consumer care hours and collaborate with the care providers. The lack of funding and prioritizing of such programs are evident in the lack of efficiency and organization in these systems, due to such things as:

- Antiquated computer systems
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of standard operating procedure
- Not supplying HCWs PSWs nor PCAs with a work ID for while on the job
- Too little investment in worker training
- A gross lack of care provider recruitment
- No effort at retention of HCWs, PSWs and PCAs

In fact, clearly the opposite. We are losing members of our workforce due to issues such as:

- Low pay
- Late pay
- Minimal paid holidays and PTO
- Lack of a direct HR department
- Weak systems for respite and relief workers

We do this work with grace, skill and compassion. Being a care provider is challenging and stressful. It is humiliating to think the greater stress lies in systemic issues, such as waiting on work approval, struggling with EVV systems, juggling bills due to late pay and working a vast number of hours unpaid (which is alarmingly common). Consumers are also directly impacted by flaws in our systems, such as having to solicit for their own care provider, insufficient oversight by state case managers, waiting for needed care or getting hours of service cut, despite no change in need.

The icing on this distasteful cake is that the state, rather than working to improve these systems, has been outsourcing their own labor force by contracting with private agencies, particularly for direct support professionals (DSP). To add insult to injury, the state is not only filtering higher wages to this outside workforce, sidestepping the contract the Homecare Division has fought hard to accomplish with the state, but is also providing overtime wages for agency employees while keeping a cap on overtime for the state's own workforce.

The structure of the American family has been changing over past generations. When relatives are available, they must be paid for caring for a family member so they can pay their own bills. The gray tsunami is coming and Oregon's care programs are not ready.

The state needs to invest time and money and provide proper oversight to create and perfect a viable program that satisfies the state's objectives, respects and appropriately compensates the state's workforce and better serves the population for which these programs are intended.

I am asking this committee to support the Co-chairs' budget, allocating \$65 million to Oregon's care programs, which provide care services under ODHS and ODDS. This will RESPECT the largest single workforce in Oregon, of over thirty thousand, who serve disabled, developmentally disabled and elderly citizens of Oregon.