



Testimony Opposing SB 1505 – Senate Rules Committee

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Starr, and Member Senator Golden (my local rep), Member Senator Manning Jr., and Member Senator Thatcher,

My name is Amber Myre, and I serve as CEO of Living Opportunities, a nonprofit service provider supporting Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) for over 50 years. We are based in Medford and serve individuals throughout southern Oregon. I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to SB 1505.

While we support fair wages, quality training, and professional growth for our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), SB 1505 is not the path to achieve those goals. The bill proposes a duplicative and costly bureaucracy that will further strain Oregon's human services system at a time when we face significant budget reductions in ODHS.

A New Board, Delayed Results, and No Pay Raises in Sight

SB 1505 sets up a Workforce Standards Board that would take until at least 2029 to implement any wage recommendations. It requires a new labor market study, a rulemaking process, and CMS approval before changes even take effect. Our workforce can't wait five years.

The state already has the data it needs. The 2025 APD-ODDS Rate and Wage Study found that Oregon must invest \$800 million in General Fund dollars to bring DSP wages to just \$23.20/hour and close the existing gap. This report gives clear recommendations, which SB 1505 does not act on, it merely adds process, not pay.

Potential \$6.2 Million in New Spending During a Budget Reduction Year

The fiscal impact is real. According to the Legislative Fiscal Office review of **last session's bill HB 3838** (dated June 13th 2025), which SB1505 is drafted from, the Board would cost taxpayers over \$5.3 million in 2025–27 and \$6.2 million in 2027–29, including 17 new state positions across four agencies. **In a year when we are being asked to reduce critical I/DD services and preserve core functions, this is the wrong time to expand bureaucracy.**

These funds would be better spent directly on DSP wages, especially as providers like Living Opportunities are already paying an average of \$2.50/hour above the state reimbursement rate just to compete in a tight labor markets.

We Already Have Oversight. We Need Investment.

DSPs provide support in highly individualized environments, including in people's private homes. Imposing broad, one-size-fits-all workplace standards through a centralized board is fundamentally at odds with the nature of in-home supports. Setting employment and working condition rules for staff operating in someone's personal living space not only creates compliance challenges but also risks disrupting relationships built on trust, privacy, and choice.

The bill also **circumvents Oregon's existing rulemaking framework**, which already ensures robust public input, community involvement, and agency accountability. By creating an entirely separate structure with its own processes, SB 1505 undermines the proven pathways that give voice to the very stakeholders this bill claims to support.

The bill duplicates existing structures. Our services are already overseen by ODDS, DHS, OHA, OSHA, BOLI, and others. Adding another board with sweeping authority over working conditions, without funding guarantees, will only complicate compliance and create new conflicts, not solve workforce challenges.

Acknowledge Those in the Room

I want to acknowledge the many individuals in the hearing room today **wearing teal and red**, they represent providers, DSPs, individuals with disabilities, and families **who are united in opposition to SB 1505**. Their presence today is a clear and powerful reminder that the people most impacted by this bill are asking you to choose funding over bureaucracy.

Targeting I/DD by Design

We are deeply concerned by recent discussions indicating that Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) may be carved out of this bill (in addition to Foster care providers being removed last session). If that occurs, it is clear that the focus of SB 1505 is to place the full burden of this bureaucracy on the developmental disabilities system.

That is unacceptable.

The I/DD system already faces persistent underfunding, unsustainable reimbursement rates, and growing service demands. Creating a costly new oversight board that only applies to I/DD providers, while excluding other HCBS systems, sends a loud and clear message: **Oregon is willing to experiment with bureaucracy on the backs of people with I/DD and those who support them.**

We urge lawmakers to reject any version of this bill that targets the I/DD system.

Conclusion

We urge this committee to reject SB 1505. The path forward is clear: Fund the existing recommendations from the 2025 Rate & Wage Study and ensure that the dollars reach DSPs quickly. Oregon doesn't need a new board to tell us what we already know, our DSP workforce deserves better pay now, not in five years.

Respectfully,
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