

Submitter: Mae Eck
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 1505

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am writing in opposition to SB 1505, which would create a Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Standards Board. While the intent to support the workforce is important, this bill introduces significant risks to Oregon's disability services system.

SB 1505 creates a statewide board with authority to set minimum workforce standards across HCBS, including rules related to training, compensation, and working conditions. It also requires state agencies to conduct fiscal impact analyses before any standard can move forward, and delays implementation until the Legislature appropriates funding and CMS approval is obtained when required. These elements create a slow, expensive, and bureaucratic process that consumes limited resources without clear benefit.

Public testimony from the Oregon Resource Association (ORA) raises significant concerns about the direction SB 1505 takes. ORA, which represents about 100 community provider organizations statewide, has documented that providers are already paying Direct Support Professionals an average of \$2.50 more per hour than current state reimbursement rates cover, rapidly depleting reserves and threatening program sustainability. ORA stresses that the HCBS system is chronically underfunded and operating with severe deficits across 24-hour residential, supported living, employment, and community inclusion programs. Adding another statewide administrative structure, as SB 1505 proposes, would increase state workload and costs while diverting energy and resources away from the system's urgent needs: stabilizing reimbursement rates and supporting the frontline workforce. ORA emphasizes that Oregon must prioritize direct investment over new bureaucratic layers that do not improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

This bill also risks creating one-size-fits-all standards in a system that is inherently diverse. HCBS includes 24-hour residential programs, supported living, employment services, foster homes, DSA programs, and personal support workers, each with different workforce needs. Centralizing decisions in a single board increases the likelihood of rules that do not fit these varied settings, potentially creating unfunded mandates and further destabilizing providers.

Most importantly, SB 1505 does not address the core issue affecting HCBS today:

inadequate provider rates and insufficient DSP wages. Creating a new regulatory board does nothing to strengthen the workforce. Instead, it introduces new administrative costs and delays at a time when Oregon needs direct investment in frontline staffing and service stability.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Legislature to oppose SB 1505. Oregon should focus its efforts on reinforcing the existing HCBS system, strengthening rates, and supporting DSPs directly not adding a new bureaucratic layer that risks reducing transparency and shifting decision-making away from the people who rely on these services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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