



Good morning, Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joanne Fuhrman, and I am the CEO and Co-founder of the non-profit provider organization Partnerships in Community Living. I began my career in this field as a Direct Support Professional more than 40 years ago. Today, PCL supports more than 200 children, adults, and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Oregon and employs more than 500 Direct support professionals (DSPs).

I also serve as the legislative chair for the Oregon Resource Association (ORA). ORA represents a network of approximately 100 primarily **nonprofit organizations that provide services to people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities** across the state. These community provider organizations deliver services in people's homes and workplaces and help them connect with their communities. **At the heart of this vital work are Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)**, whose dedication makes this challenging yet deeply rewarding mission possible.

I am here, standing with the IDD Community, **to strongly oppose SB 1505**. This bill does nothing to improve wages for this workforce. You do not need a board to tell you what this workforce needs. At your direction, DHS already funded a Rate and Wage Study that determined service funding is, on average, 30% below what is needed to create a sustainable workforce. You already have the information necessary to support the Direct Support Professionals workforce; what remains is determining how to fund it. This is where our focus should be. These are the conversations we should be having.

Regarding other workforce protections, this bill would grant an unelected board **unlimited authority over employment practices**. Our services are already heavily regulated, and Oregon has some of the strongest worker protection laws in the nation. We should not spend limited resources on a new, redundant bureaucracy, especially in these difficult times.

There has been testimony regarding how similar boards have functioned in other states. It is important to note that those boards are merely advisory and are limited to a single, specific service. No other state allows a board like this to make sweeping decisions and impose legal regulations across a diverse workforce operating in a variety of different settings and service models.



I have stood with ORA, and the community organizations they represent to advocate for DSP wages for almost 40 years. During this time, ORA and its members have been the primary voices in advocating for Direct Support Professionals and for valuing their work and raising wages. We have consistently pushed for improved working conditions and benefits. In contrast, proponents of this bill have not historically supported this workforce and, at times, have directly advocated against our Direct Support Professionals. This is one of the many reasons why self-advocates, family members, and the IDD community at large oppose this bill.

Oregon is a national model for best practices in IDD services, grounded in a long history of person-centered support. This means that in Oregon, services are highly individualized to each person's needs and desires. As providers, we know that delivering this value requires us to be great employers, offering competitive wages and safe, supportive work environments.

One of my major concerns is that the Workforce Standards Board would reduce choice for people with IDD and prioritize workforce rules and overregulation over service quality. The I/DD comprehensive provider system is already highly regulated by ODDS, BOLI, and OSHA, among others; this reality must be acknowledged. We do not need a costly board. **We need to focus on DSP wages right now.**

SB 1505 would divert much-needed funding from our workforce and impose additional administrative burden on an already complex, highly regulated system. I urge you not to proceed with this confusing, unnecessary bill. Vote NO on SB 1505.

Sincerely,

Joanne Fuhrman, MRA SPHR
Chief Executive Officer & Founder