

Submitter: Krista Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Krista Smith. I am the Executive Director of RISE Services, Inc., an organization that provides services to people with disabilities across ten counties in Oregon. I also serve on Oregon's Council on Developmental Disabilities. I have spent more than 20 years working within Oregon's intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) system, beginning my career as a Direct Support Professional.

I want to be clear at the outset: there is broad agreement that Oregon's direct care workforce needs higher wages. The challenge before us is how to achieve that goal effectively and responsibly.

SB 1505 does not deliver higher wages. Instead, it adds duplication, process, and administrative complexity without addressing compensation. The Legislature already has the data it needs. In 2024, the Department of Human Services completed an independent rate and wage study identifying an estimated \$530 million funding gap in I/DD services. SB 1505 does not address this gap, nor does it provide funding to deliver meaningful wage increases for Direct Support Professionals.

Rather than investing in rates, the bill creates a new, unelected board with broad authority to set employment and workplace standards—authority that has traditionally and appropriately remained with the Legislature. These standards could be enforced through litigation and may include requirements related to benefits, scheduling, staffing ratios, overtime, and training, all without dedicated funding to support compliance.

This proposal comes at a time when Oregon already leads the nation in worker protections, raising serious questions about the necessity and effectiveness of creating an additional regulatory structure. For providers like ours—who already invest heavily in wages, training, and accountability—SB 1505 risks diverting limited public resources away from direct care and into additional bureaucracy.

If the goal is to stabilize and grow Oregon's direct care workforce, the path forward is clear: fund the rate study, invest directly in DSP wages, and strengthen existing oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Krista Smith
Executive Director, RISE Services, Inc.