



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

February 4, 2025

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Starr and members of the Senate Rules Committee,

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 workers across the state in every sector of Oregon's economy and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 1505 to create a Home and Community-Based Services Workforce Standards Board to establish minimum standards for the home and community-based services workforce.

Homecare workers care for our friends, neighbors, and family members. They often go unthanked and underpaid. Moreover, there is a drought and substantial turnover in this workforce because of this dynamic. Workers can't afford to stay in hard jobs where they can't make ends meet, do not have benefits, and are shown time and again that they are expendable.

If we are serious about meeting our need for over 65,000 more homecare workers by 2030, we must make serious changes to this industry. However, there is a discrepancy in the industry with care workers having inequitable access to affordable benefits.

Providing care workers with affordable benefits is key to stabilizing the industry and improving care quality. High turnover, driven by low wages and lack of benefits, disrupts care and increases costs. When workers have access to health care, paid leave, and retirement security, they stay in their jobs longer, leading to better continuity of care and improved health outcomes for all. Investing in benefits also attracts new talent, reduces reliance on costly temporary staffing, and strengthens the industry, all things we must do to meet our 2030 goal.

Furthermore, we do not believe that any worker should be barred from having a voice in their workplace, or be held to a different standard. When we exclude workers from having the same rights as other workers it results in this exact situation: depressed wages, high turnover, and lack of standardized training.

SB 1505 is a product of long conversations and work across stakeholders in this industry. In covering DD workers, SB 1505 is a good start to meaningfully transforming and sustaining this critical workforce and industry. We urge your support.