



Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Starr and members of the committee,

My name is Brooke Hill, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Oregon AFSCME. We are a labor union of around 40,000 members advocating for workers and their families in the public and private sectors. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support for HB 4088 today. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 1505. We support the creation of a Home and Community-Based Services Workforce Standards Board to establish minimum standards for the home and community-based services workforce.

This sector of workers is often overlooked and underpaid. They do difficult and essential work, caring for the most vulnerable in our communities daily. However, because they are often not compensated fairly for their time and commitment, this workforce consistently faces burnout and high turnover. Having to choose between healthcare, food, or other basic services is a reality for many of these workers. No one should have to make that choice.

In addition, it is estimated that our state will need over 65,000 more homecare workers by 2030. In order to meet this growing need, we must make serious changes to this industry and give workers a seat at the table. However, there is a discrepancy in the industry with care workers having inequitable access to affordable benefits. Providing benefits, paid leave, and retirement benefits allow workers a better quality of life, and also allows them to stay in their jobs for longer. Many of these workers care deeply about the communities they serve. They form close personal relationships with their colleagues and clients, which improves outcomes for all.

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. Allowing workers a voice in the work they do every day will improve cost burden and create a better working environment for all.

SB 1505 is a product of robust 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. Oregon AFSCME urges your support.

Sincerely,
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