

Ways and means testimony April 14, 2021

Good evening chairs and committee members,

For the record, my name is Patty Falkenstein, and I am a personal support worker in Tigard. I have worked as a care provider for over 30 years. I am here today to ask you to prioritize funding that supports the care workers who have masked up and shown up to work throughout the pandemic, wildfires and ice storms. We care for Oregon's most vulnerable citizens and we didn't let them down during these emergencies.

The American Rescue Plan has provided funds to acknowledge the crucial role essential workers have played in keeping Oregon up and running. I'm asking you to put those hazard pay dollars into the pockets of the people who showed up day after day and took the risks. Caregivers and other frontline workers did this selflessly, and without complaint.

Oregon has consistently ranked among the states with the fewest COVID cases, and that's because of the workers who have showed up every day, worn masks, and kept our communities safe. Essential worker pay will stimulate Oregon's economy- let's face it caregiving is not a high paying job- hazard pay will likely be plowed right back into the economy. We have the opportunity to recognize inequity, help workers make ends meet, and show respect to the people who have kept our state going throughout the pandemic and emergencies..

Homecare workers have been on the frontlines of COVID since day one. We continued to care for our consumers throughout this pandemic, without adequate PPE, without hazard pay or extra support from the state. We do this work because we love it and because it's important. And what's more, because of Oregon's strong homecare program that allows people to remain in their homes, rather than being in a facility, I think it's safe to say that less people died from COVID than could have if they were in nursing homes. I'm talking about your family elders, your family member with a disability, and family members experiencing mental illness. The state is set to receive millions of dollars for home and community based care. What we're asking for is recognition of the work we have done for over a year now, front line essential workers deserve it.

Thank you for having this hearing and for taking my testimony.

Sincerely,

Patty Falkenstein Personal Support Worker
Tigard