

**DEB PATTERSON
STATE SENATOR/SENADORA ESTATAL
DISTRICT/DISTRITO 10**



OREGON STATE SENATE/SENADO DEL ESTADO DE OREGON

February 1, 2022

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson and Honorable Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Deb Patterson, State Senator from State District 10 and I have also been a caregiver for a family member. I am here to add my support for SB 1556.

A few months ago, I toured several dozen businesses around the Senate District in which I serve. One visit was to an insurance broker who told me that his office no longer offers long-term care insurance to clients because of the cost. Younger people avoid investing in an insurance product which they may not need for decades, if ever, leaving a smaller risk pool, primarily of older adults, an unsustainable model for an insurer. Many people, therefore, try not to think about the cost or the quality of long-term care until it is needed by a member of their family or themselves.

Workers in long-term care, however, are well aware of the costs and the need for quality care, and are committed to providing that care. They do, however, need support for their work, which includes adequate training and compensation commensurate with the responsibility for the safety and well-being of the medically fragile people for whom they provide care. This has been starkly illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, where 33% of all deaths from COVID occurred in LTC facilities. As recently as January of this year, there were 500 care facilities in Oregon with COVID cases.

Without adequate training support and compensation commensurate with training and experience, staff are more likely to leave for other opportunities. Indeed, there are currently 3,000 direct care staff vacancies in long-term care across our state, impacting the quality of care in facilities, and the number of people able to be served. OPB reported two weeks ago that there were 582 people in hospitals – one out of every 10 hospital patients who were waiting for discharge to a long-term care facility.

SB 1556 addresses some of the issues around training and safety for workers as well as transparency for family members about the qualifications of the caregiver hired to help them. This bill creates an accessible, transparent tool for employers, consumers and family members to confirm that a caregiver has met training and background check requirements. Some of you may already have experience with this - hiring or looking into long term caregivers for a family member. Being confident that that person you've hired is qualified and will take care of your loved one is extremely important for your peace of mind and this bill will help you feel more secure about who is taking care of your loved one.

Another important aspect to this bill is the benefit to the worker. This certification registry is a step toward a career ladder that will reduce worker turnover, keeping people in this profession to meet

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growing demand. There is an opt-out option for home care workers acting as a family member's caregiver.

SB 1556 is a needed step forward toward more transparency, accountability, and better care for some of our most vulnerable Oregonians. It is also a needed step forward toward better working conditions for some of our most hard-working and committed Oregonians. I urge the committee to support SB 1556 and thank you for the time to speak to you today.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deb Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Deb Patterson