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My name is Angie Temple and I am the Developmental Disabilities Program Manager for Symmetry Care, Inc. in Harney County.

This bill came about as a result of a small meeting in Burns, Oregon with Rep. Owens and members of the Harney Co. Employment First team discussing the difficulties we face in serving people who experience IDD in rural communities. None of our team have ever been involved in drafting and presenting a bill before, which has become evident as we have worked our way to this point. We understand that there may need to be a workgroup established to work out some of the details we didn't think about or know about, and we are open to that, but we are so grateful for the opportunity to be heard.

In the rural counties of Oregon, employees of Community Developmental Disabilities Programs and Brokerages have to perform many duties and fill multiple positions to meet the same contractual obligations as metro counties. We also have the benefit of getting to know the people we serve well, understand their needs and get involved with trying to help them meet those needs with very limited resources and a lot of creativity.

People here don't have the luxury of multiple provider agencies and personal support workers to choose from. Most people who live remotely rely on family members to provide their attendant care. However, that is not always possible for various reasons such as aging parents, family members' needs to work outside the home for financial reasons, and compassion fatigue. Recruitment efforts to find personal supports workers are exercised, but results are minimal, especially when you add the requirement of a long commute to be able to do the job.

One person we serve lives on a remote cattle ranch where his dad is employed and the family is provided housing as part of dad's employment. This young man has a disability that requires him to have constant supervision for his safety. He has completed high school and now spends his days at home working towards his desired outcomes with his older sister, who is his paid personal support worker. Their mother works as a long-haul truck driver, and is rarely home, so he lacks additional natural supports as well. This young man's needs assessment authorizes 369 attendant care hours per month to support him. However, because of his remote location, he is provided less than 200 hours per month of paid support which makes it difficult for him to meet his goals and have his needs met. It also places a heavy burden on his sister who actually provides significantly more hours of support than she actually gets paid for.

When a person's needs cannot be met locally in their own homes, they then look to a higher level of care such as foster homes, host homes, and 24-hour group homes. When you live in Eastern Oregon, this usually means moving not only out of your home, but also out of your community and sometimes across the State. Just this week, a 17-year-old that we serve was moved all the way to Gresham. This is a 275-mile separation between him and his family and community that he has known all his life. While it might turn out to be a great thing for him, that is a lot of transition all at once for anyone. A secondary result of this outcome is the financial impact. The cost of this young man's care just increased immensely. I understand that there are federal funds involved, but I was taught that a dollar is a dollar and to be fiscally responsible no matter where it comes from.

As a case management entity, Symmetry Care is charged with providing the people we serve with choice. We are also expected to provide equitable services for all. I don't believe that this means equitable services as compared to others who choose to live in Harney County, but equitable services for ALL Oregonians. The people we serve deserve to be afforded the opportunity to live at home, in their communities, and receive the services they need to be healthy, independent and safe. This bill provides one aspect of this and we would appreciate your support on HB 2500.

Respectfully,



Angie Temple
I/DD Program Manager