

Submitter: Radiant Gaines

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

To whom it may concern,

I have been as DSP for almost 10 years in the state of Oregon. My job ranges from 12 hours a week to 60 depending on circumstances of humanity. I have dealt with a wide variety of clients, mostly adults. Most clients when they work with me, will only work with me from then on out. I think it takes a special person to build rapport and authenticity, without giving too much personal information.

Caregiver is my favorite job, it's the hardest at time, but yet the most rewarding at times. The greatest compliment a caregiver can get is when a retired nurse, says, "oh this is a good one!"

With that said, as a care staff I'm required to know a certain amount of medical information, attend trainings, and deal with difficult situations. These difficult situations, the public doesn't want to acknowledge or deal with. In fact, in these days, a greater amount of families are unable or unwilling to deal with family members with disabilities. That's where a good caregiver is important. To create a place for clients to get the care they need, while families can just love their loved one without stressing over care needs. I must be willing to meet my clients at the emergency room at 2am if need be, or be delegated to change their colostomy bag, or administer insulin.

Although being a caregiver has its great days of just watching a movie in companionship, or watching a client take their first steps with a cane after being wheelchair bound for years, it can be challenging. A caregiver must take steps to care for themselves, which include: have a quiet space at home to rest and rejuvenate. Being able to afford gym memberships and potential spa days as well as to pay the high amounts of rent required these days. Caregivers shouldn't have to worry about losing a client, and how that will effect their ability to pay rent, while they grieve. No one ever talks about that.

I typically spend 2-5 hours every week, planning events, scheduling appointments, brainstorming activities, and preparing for things to go wrong. Being a caregiver requires one to be on their game at all times, preparing to de escalate situations, advocate for clients needs (even if you might offend someone else)

I also think if caregivers could get paid an honest wage for what they deal with, they would be less likely to work under the table, and more likely to make sure they have adequate liability insurance, through their company or individually.

Caregiving is not for everyone and the ones that don't make the cut, just won't make it. But those that do, that take pride in their job, and do it with passion and compassion should be adequately accommodated.

I also think that caregivers should have a union to help them with potential benefits

and conflicts. And I think that the state should offer and monitor certifications that allow caregivers to make more money based on specific skill sets. Like being able to transfer a person from the wheelchair to the shower chair.

Thank you for reading my letter. I hope you will consider raising my rate, because it's only a matter of time before your loved one needs me, and you certainly don't want me working at McDonald's to make ends meet because my client died two weeks ago. And you certainly don't want someone else to care for your loved one who can't handle all their needs.

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