



February 12, 2024

To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for HB 4129

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a professional association and labor union representing over 17,000 nurses and healthcare professionals. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

While ONA does not represent any homecare workers, the Homecare Modernization Act impacts our members throughout the health care system. Homecare workers are a critical part of the continuity of care framework. Their work includes helping elders and people with disabilities take their medication, eat meals, and hydrate. Homecare workers also provide social connection, which has a significant impact on health: loneliness can increase the risk of heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline.¹ Without this care, the participants served by homecare workers would experience serious health consequences, and they would be forced turn to our already-overburdened healthcare system. In short, homecare workers ensure that participants receive the care they need, without having to turn to a hospital or nursing home.

Unfortunately, Oregon's current system is not adequately supporting our homecare workers: pay is often late, or inaccurate. There is no central resource to answer worker or participant questions, and participants sometimes struggle to find the help that they need. All these factors contribute to worker burnout and difficulty staying in the field, at a time when Oregon has an aging population and an increased need for homecare workers. Modernization, and a switch to the Agency with Choice model, will provide necessary administrative support to both workers and participants. It will allow homecare workers to focus on providing care, supporting not just their clients, but the entire healthcare system. Please support HB 4129. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services . "The Power of Connection: How It Can Improve Our Health." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 28 Apr. 2023, www.cdc.gov/emotional-wellbeing/features/power-of-connection.htm.