

Submitter: Sallie Eimstad

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB4129

I am Sallie Eimstad, a Eugene area state approved Home Care Worker. I have provided in home care for two elderly siblings unrelated to me for nearly a decade. I grew up in a small Oregon town caring for generations of family members. I have a degree in community service and public affairs with independent studies in community college student services administration and had nearly achieved a graduate degree in industrial relations with a labor law specialty when my educational and career pursuits were involuntarily redirected by a serious accident so I became a licensed private investigator. A long-time acquaintance asked me to investigate a situation involving her then Home Care Worker which led me to agree to get approved and care for her temporarily while she sought a permanent replacement. Weeks evolved into years and expanded to include serving her elderly disabled sister as well.

Quality professional in home care is all that stands between my consumers and institutional care that would seriously limit their quality of life while costing taxpayers a great deal more than the care I provide them in their home where they get to remain together as the only remaining members of their family.

I monitor my consumers' complex medical conditions, manage their medications, coordinate and guide communications between them and their medical care providers and insurers, plan and prepare nutritional meals compatible with their medical diagnoses and lack of teeth, provide cognitive support, guide their hygiene practices, and attempt to involve them in their community. I am their sounding board, grievance mediator, advocate, and friend. Each of these tasks requires ongoing training, patience, the ability to serve as a role model and teacher, and creative and critical thinking.

Many challenges including late pay, job instability, and lack of worker protections plague Home Care Workers. I was injured on the job in 2020 and again in 2021 by a consumer who unintentionally, but seriously, injured me on the job in a way that threatened every aspect of my livelihood. The Oregon Home Care Commission offers no light duty for injured workers, so they met with SAIF representatives and cut my working hours from thirty-one and a half hours to two hours per week, and I had to fight to keep that so I could retain my Medicare reimbursement, my medical copay/co-insurance benefits card, and my right to continue membership in SEIU. I had zero input into what they decided I was capable of doing so they approved tasks I couldn't do without pain and disapproved those I could much more easily perform. I had to fight to regain paid time up to fourteen and a half hours per week and I fought

again to get up to twenty-two and a half hours per week. Because the Oregon Home Care Commission doesn't provide adaptive tools to help me perform tasks made difficult or impossible by my injuries, I either have to learn about and pay for them on my own or do without and endure the resulting unnecessary pain.

The current system is in distress. Passage of HB 4129 is a step toward a more worker supportive client directed home care system to help keep consumers in their own homes, some with their only family members, with a much higher quality of life at a much lower cost to taxpayers than possible in institutional care. I urge you to support HB 4129 to protect the quality of life of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens and that of the workers who provide their care.