



House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

Testimony in Support of HB 4129 - Agency with Choice

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AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50+ to choose how they live as they age. AARP Oregon advocates on issues important to our more than 500,000 Oregon members with a focus on health security, financial resilience, and livable communities. **We are pleased to support HB 4129 the Homecare Modernization Act (AWC) and establish a new option for homecare services in addition to those provided by the Oregon Home Care Commission (OHCC).**

We desperately need to invest in homecare services for older Oregonians. A few statistics to frame what our future looks like. Oregon is now the "oldest" contiguous state west of the Mississippi. Currently almost 20% of Oregon population is age 65+ and for 12 out of Oregon's 36 counties, 25% people their population are already over age 65+. By 2030, Oregon's age 65+ population will be nearing 1 million and the fastest growing segment of our population are people over the age of 85.

In AARP Oregon's Feb. 2023 survey of Oregon adults age 45+, 84% of respondents said that it was extremely or very important to stay in their own homes as they age, and 72% said that it was extremely or very important to have high quality long-term care and well-trained care workers in their community.

We know there is a health care workforce crisis and we know there is a critical, indeed *growing*, need for paid family caregivers. While this legislation is focused on providing support to paid caregivers, it is important to understand the full caregiving picture in Oregon.

Today in Oregon, there are over 470,000 unpaid family caregivers who help older family members or friends have quality of life and maintain independence. From simple tasks to complex medical care, family caregivers contribute 440 million care hours per year equivalent to \$8.7 billion of unpaid labor.

And some of those family caregivers may ultimately end up as family paid caregivers, utilizing the services and support of the state to provide critical care.

HB 4129 builds on our efforts to provide home and community based services that allow for *consumer-directed care*. AWC will provide important consumer services including assistance with payroll matters and providing access to back-up caregivers while reinforcing what is very important to AARP: giving the consumer the right to select, approve, direct and train their direct support workers, as well as the choice whether to retain the direct support workers providing their care.

For AARP, we want to emphasize the continued need to provide a robust OHCC and urge the state to continue to address any barriers encountered by consumers. We believe a strong OHCC provides a particular valuable service to those consumers who have a family member, loved one or friend who wants to step in to provide one-time caregiving services and are not looking to build a career in caregiving. And AWC provides an excellent option for those who are making caregiving work a career. Both systems need to function to provide flexibility for all types of caregivers, be they temporary or those seeking professional support.