

Submitter: Craig Downer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB4129

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Scharf and Nguyen (Win) , and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Craig Downer, and I'm a Case Manager Lead with Department of Human Services - Aging and People with Disabilities.

I'm advocating for HB 4129, which promises to enhance our existing system in three significant ways:

Firstly 4129, aims to make in-home care more accessible to clients by alleviating their administrative burden. Under the current model, clients are tasked with managing their care provider, which includes handling paperwork and administrative tasks associated with being the "common law employer." This can pose significant challenges, particularly for those grappling with cognitive impairments or technological limitations. By streamlining these processes, 4129 would empower clients to receive the care they need while reducing unnecessary obstacles. I've seen many consumers and their families struggle to manage yet another system and getting them care lags. Many of our clients will just "go without," living in squalor. Without freshly prepared food, or wearing the same set of clothing they've had on for days and haven't bathed.

Secondly, this bill would relieve case managers of administrative and HR-related duties concerning homecare workers. Presently, case managers often find themselves serving as default support for such workers, despite it falling outside the scope of their roles. We pick up the slack because we care about workers and our clients, but this added responsibility not only exacerbates the stress we face as case managers but also detracts from our ability to focus on crucial service planning and client support. By implementing measures to provide adequate support for homecare workers, HB 4129 would enable case managers to focus on our core responsibilities like service coordination, assessments, and crisis support.

Third, the Act would do a lot to address the shortage of available homecare workers in our state. Many clients struggle to fill their approved in-home hours due to a lack of available workers. This not only limits choice and self-determination for vulnerable populations but also contributes to increased demand for community-based care facilities, nursing homes, and hospitals. HB 4129 mandates the maintenance of an adequate caregiving workforce, ensuring that individuals can continue to receive the care they need in the comfort of their own homes. Often times clients get to us from an APS (Adult protective Services) "Self neglect complaint." They've been witnessed of drastic weight loss, wearing filthy clothes, erratic behavior (UTIs gone unchecked) or just a plain "failure to thrive." 4129 would speed up getting help.

In conclusion, 4129 represents a crucial step towards improving access to essential in-home care services for aging adults and individuals with disabilities in our state. By

reducing administrative barriers, supporting case managers, and bolstering our homecare workforce, 4129 promises to uphold the dignity and autonomy of those in need while strengthening our long-term care capacity. This streamlining will also have a cost saving effect. The state of Oregon pays private agencies \$36.24 per hour vs. our HCW wage of roughly \$21 to \$25 per hour. We can also get the right HCWs, to the right clients. The continuity of care would increase too, HCWs need time off too, they get sick, vacations etc. This set up would allow us to fill these gaps in care, efficiently.

I urge you to support this vital legislation, for the well-being and independence of our communities depend on it. This legislation will help us be good stewards of our elderly and disabled population and good stewards of our state's budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Craig Downer, Lead Case Manager.