



To: Sen Gelser-Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Jennifer Santiago

Re: Support for SB 725, capping caseloads for I/DD case management at 1:30

Chair Sen. Gelser-Blouin and committee members,

My name is Jennifer Santiago and I am the Executive Director at Community Pathways, Inc., a support service brokerage that serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) living in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. I am also a resident of Clackamas county.

I am asking that SB 725 pass this Regular Session to establish a minimum staffing ratio of 30 to 1 for service coordinators (SCs) and personal agents (PAs) serving individuals with IDD.

I am submitting this testimony as someone who has over 30 years of experience working in the field of IDD. I started my career as a direct support professional (DSP) and also worked as a Personal Agent (PA) before starting and leading Community Pathways. I have first-hand knowledge of the experience of managing a caseload of 43 people and can attest to the struggles of meeting demands when caseloads are high. I distinctly remember a point where each new person added to my workload made it compounding more difficult to meet the demands of the job. The required paperwork during my time as a PA, 17 years ago, was substantially less than it is now. At Community Pathways we are currently working to reduce caseloads to 1:36. Even at this ratio, I can see that anything over 1:30 creates a strain where PAs start to struggle to meet both the support needs of people and the paperwork demands that are required.

PAs and SCs often have to make the very difficult decision between supporting people and ensuring their paperwork meets required timelines and requirements. If we assume a caseload size of 40, then each person would conceivably have approximately 1 hour of a case manager's time per week. That one hour has to cover a very large array of work including, but not limited to, travel time, scheduling meetings, developing and writing individual support plans (ISP) and service agreements (SA), amending ISPs and SAs, phone calls, follow up, case coordination, crisis response and follow up and so much more. This time does not factor in time needed for staff and managerial meetings, training, and so on. It is also not uncommon for a caseload to have multiple people needing extra support in any given week. A person in a significant crisis can take over 50% of a case manager's



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time. When polling our PAs, I got feedback ranging from 25%-75% depending on the crisis. Here is one example of the feedback I received: *It is hard to tell exactly. It also depends on the crisis. When it involves housing (customer being evicted, becoming homeless, moving hotels, finding immediate housing), law enforcement (customer arrested, pending charges, developing safety and behavioral plans), hospitalizations, etc., those crises can take 30-65% of the workload. I think it also depends if the customer has any paid or natural supports. If they don't have any, then you are their primary support during that challenging time, then that percentage is higher.*

The required workload doesn't change when there is an active, ongoing need, so the PA will often have less time to spend on pro-active planning with people, general follow up, and even their regular duties.

As someone who directs a non-profit agency and has been doing this kind of work for the past 20 years, I am in strong support for any initiative that helps reduce caseload size.

Establishing a minimum staff ratio of 30 to 1 for SCs and PAs is a critical step in ensuring this positive outcome for all Oregonians with IDD and the people who provide them with support on a daily basis.

I strongly recommend passing SB 725.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration

Sincerely,

Jennifer Santiago, Executive Director
Community Pathways, Inc.
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