

Submitter: Jared Weekly
On Behalf Of: Myself Personally
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3838

To the honorable members of the House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards,

I know I submitted written testimony on behalf of my agency prior to the public hearing, and it may be presumptuous, but I wanted to submit personal testimony as well about my experience in direct care services. A big focus of members questions seemed to be pushing for answers that portrayed this as pro union and pro worker, or anti-union and anti-worker. I'm hoping that some perspective from someone with just over 20 years in this field, half of it in direct care, could show that this bill should be thought of in a broader context than this.

When I first started in the field out of high school I had zero training as a personal support worker. I actually wasn't even aware of the job I had applied for until I arrived at the young man's home that I would now be responsible for. Luckily, I worked for a great family, who truly supported and cared for their son, and they helped me transition to become a great support staff for him. As that young man became an adult and transitioned to a 24hr group home Personal Support Workers became unionized. I stood alongside the unions efforts for better training, wages, and supports because had I not had a great family I worked with, I knew things could have gone differently. I switched roles at this time, working for a private agency, but my personal information was disclosed to the union. I received constant phone calls asking me to sign up and pay dues. When I pointed out I was no longer a PSW I was told I could join and pay dues to be represented regardless. I knew the law but also came from a pro union family. I politely declined and asked not to be called again each time, but the calls still continued, and I was even asked to try to unionize my new agency I worked for. Because of this I was targeted as a union sympathizer by that agency even though I really just wanted to be left alone. I have long felt that that particular agency was a bad actor and not representative of all, but I also did not appreciate the actions and lies of SEIU either.

Fast forward many years, several cuts to services by the legislature, and another agency later, I found myself in management, having to explain to my staff why wages for our field were not going up despite the recovery we were experiencing from the great recession. No amount of explanation could help my DSPs understand how the cuts we were being handed were affecting the agencies bottom line, I and those above me would still be the bad guys who underpaid our employees. We fought though alongside our DSPs at the capitol for better wages and rates. When the

legislature came through for us our agency poured those rates into wages but also restored benefits that had been slashed due to cuts. SEIU reached out to my staff and told them that the legislature had authorized vast amounts of money to raise their wages and asked them to reach out to legislators and inform them about how little we had given them of that money. We sat with our staff and accounted for how that money had been spent, but the damage was done, they all had a different opinion of how that money should have been spent and we were back to being the bad guys.

I have long been pro union, when I see a benefit to the workers. If I thought HB 3838 or unionization would change the lives of our DSPs I would support it in a heartbeat, as would other providers. The reality for us though is that you, the legislature, control our purse strings. Our money is stretched thin and we do our best to push wages and benefits up when we can, but the ultimate power to make a difference lies with you. Not a wage board, not a union whose members admitted in testimony they are compensated the same as our DSPs, and not in providers who spend 70%-80% of their funding on direct services. It lies solely with those who control the purse. If you want to see better wages, fund the rate model, not another study