

March 25, 2025

Good Morning, Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Committee.

My name is Joanne Fuhrman, and I'm the CEO and Co-founder of the non-profit provider organization Partnerships in Community Living. I started in this field as a Direct Support Professional over 40 years ago. Today, PCL supports over 200 children, adults, and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Oregon and employs over 500 DSPs.

I'm here in strong support of SB133 with the -1 Amendment. This is not just about dollars—it's about fairness. This bill simply restores what was once standard: an annual cost of living adjustment. In most industries, it's expected. In our field, for our workforce, it's long overdue.

As many of you have heard, IDD Community Providers are 99% funded by state and federal dollars. That means we're forced to make up the difference ourselves without a sustainable way to keep up with rising costs (i.e., new investments from the Legislature). Currently, PCL and providers like us across the state pay, on average, \$2.50 more per hour than the \$18.77 wage funded in our rate model. For us, that's \$2.1 million every year that we must come up with beyond what the state provides just to do right by those we support and the amazing people doing this work. We've only been able to do this by dipping into our limited reserves. In the last three years, we've spent over 30% of those reserves raising starting wages and providing annual increases for our dedicated DSPs. Without your action, this is not sustainable. At this rate, our reserves will run out within the next four years.

The DHS Rate & Wage study you just heard about shows a \$558 million gap between the cost of services and what providers are paid – which means what we can pay DSPs. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring that the divide does not continue to grow.

The people we support deserve stability. They deserve to have people they trust to support them. Our DSPs deserve living wages so they can focus on the people we serve and not how they will make rent this month. This bill is how we honor that. It's how we make sure providers aren't forced to make impossible choices between keeping our



Partnerships in  
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doors open to provide high-quality support and paying fair wages to the staff the people we support depend on.

Please pass SB133 with the -1 Amendment and show the community provider system, the Direct Support Professionals we employ, and the people we support that Oregon values their work, believes in fairness, and is committed to sustaining quality support for people with I/DD.

Respectfully,

Joanne Fuhrman, MRA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP  
CEO-Partnerships in Community Living, Inc.