

To: Representative Hartman and Members of the Committee

Re: In Support of HB 2150-2

My name is Lois Gibson and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Resource Association (ORA). **I am writing in strong support of HB 2150 -2.** ORA supports, advocates and offers resources to about 100 organizations that provide services for people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities throughout the state.

Last session, the legislature asked the Department of Human Services (DHS) to complete a Rate and Wage study across all home and community based services. This demonstrated the chronic underfunding of this workforce and the fact that we have not had Cost of Living Adjustments for many years. **For the first time, this study attached a concrete figure for the funding shortfall for your home and community based workers —an alarming \$558 million. A COLA will not close this gap, but it will stop it from growing even larger.**

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the cornerstone of these services. **As you heard in testimony from some of ORA's nonprofit members, community provider organizations are paying DSPs an average of \$2.50 an hour more than they are reimbursed.** This is quickly eating through their reserves and will lead to the loss of experienced, compassionate providers if not immediately addressed. **It is simply not sustainable.**

During the hearing, SEIU highlighted issues with large for-profit providers earning high profits and offering wages others can't match. This concern is limited to one particular ODDS service, where loopholes, noncompliance and fraud are factors. ODDS must strengthen oversight and tighten regulations for this model. I'm happy to share specific recommendations to address the issue—while also ensuring compliant community providers aren't unfairly penalized.

Finally, all of the other **services that ODDS offers through partnership with community provider organizations are running large deficits.** These services include 24-hour Residential and Supported Living Providers who serve some of the most vulnerable people in the state, as well as services that help people to gain and keep employment and stay actively involved in their communities. These services are dependent on state and federal funding and the system will collapse without your support and an infusion of funding in the 25-27 DHS Budget. **Approving an annual COLA is a good first step toward stabilizing this workforce.**

Support Direct Support Professionals and approve HB 2150 - 2.

Sincerely,

Lois A. Gibson
Executive Director
Oregon Resource Association