

3/27/25

Senate Committee on Human Services

Re: Testimony on SB 133

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cristal DeJarnac. For nine years, I've served as a Homecare and Personal Support Worker for Oregon, and I currently lead SEIU 503's Homecare membership as our sub-local President, representing about 30,000 state-paid in-home care providers.

I've seen our union fight relentlessly for living wages. Through pickets, bargaining and member organizing we've now won a pay scale that tops out at \$24 an hour after 10,000 hours worked. While we're a champion for the wages and benefits we deserve, most agency DSPs already earn more - despite performing identical work with the same clients. These pay disparities have real consequences. Over 4,000 PSWs have left state employment for private agencies in the last five years, fracturing care relationships for vulnerable Oregonians. Meanwhile, we've watched the state create 'Medicaid Millionaires' out of some agency owners - with Rever Grand being the most egregious example. Despite SEIU 503 and your state workforce exposing their Medicaid fraud, these private agencies continue receiving taxpayer funds while we struggle to retain quality caregivers.

Our most recent SEIU contract bargaining survey further reveals the human impact of these inequities and the challenges we'll continue to face if we cannot reach a living and competitive wage for our work. Survey data from our membership shows:

- 68% live paycheck to paycheck
- 40% earn ≤\$30,000 annually
- more than half have at least one dependent
- 1 in 4 work multiple jobs
- 30% rely on public assistance
- 71% are housing insecure, spending more than 50% of their paycheck on housing and another 7% report experiencing homelessness

These aren't just statistics - they're your state workforce. While SB 133 would automatically grant COLAs to agencies, we must bargain every two years for similar adjustments, with no guarantees. This isn't equitable treatment for equal work.

I urge you to modify SB 133 from its current form. Instead, let's create a fair system that:

1. Honors the legislature's commitment to the state's workforce
2. Maintains pay parity across all care providers
3. Ensures accountability for all recipients of state funds

Our clients deserve consistency. Your workforce deserves fairness. Please don't codify inequality into law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cristal DeJarnac

SEIU Local 99 Homecare President

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