

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 Diana Evens. I've been a PSW for over 30 years—first in California, now in Oregon—caring for both consumers and a loved one in my family. I do this work because it's who I am. My family member cried every time he had to return to his residential facility, and his tears broke my heart. So that's why I care for him now. He *chose* us over institutional care. And that's the power of home-based support—it's humane, it's cost-effective, and it's what our community wants. But this bill? It's unfair the way it's currently written and here's why:

At the post office, our raises were negotiated *and enforced*. At a salon, my boss—not the state—decided my pay. If private agencies get automatic COLAs, where's the guarantee that workers see a dime? I've watched agencies demand funding increases while passing only crumbs to staff. Why reward them *first*—while PSWs like me fight tooth and nail for every raise?

DSPs at agencies already have more visibility than PSWs, even though we do *identical* work. Now you're giving agencies automatic raises, while we—your state-contracted workers—must fight every step for parity? That's not just unfair—it's a solution that cripples our ability to compete. If agencies can offer higher wages *without* accountability, who'll choose to work under the Oregon Homecare Commission? You're starving the very system that keeps families together.

If this bill passes, it must include three fixes: (1) Full transparency—proof that every penny reaches workers, not overhead; (2) Equal pay for equal work—PSWs must receive no less than the same COLA as agencies, no exceptions; and (3) Respect—no more treating PSWs as 'less than' DSPs when we do identical work. Without these changes, this bill will funnel money to agencies while leaving frontline caregivers—and the vulnerable Oregonians we protect—behind. I urge the committee not to let that happen.

We're at a breaking point. If agencies get unchecked raises while PSWs keep fighting for scraps, who will remain to care for Oregon's most vulnerable? Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Evens
Cottage Grove, Oregon