

Hi Denise – My name is Robin Gibson, and my agency, Olympic Community Action Programs, holds the caregiver training contract for Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, and Pacific Counties. We provide approximately 24,000 hours of training to 1645 unduplicated individuals each year. I would like to share some thoughts, as a stakeholder, on the topics left to be discussed by the work group. I am hoping that you will share my comments with the consultants and with the members of the work group. I am also a member of the Home Care Coalition, our chair, Eric Erickson has been attending the work group meetings and providing comment and testimony as appropriate.

I see no need to reinvent the wheel, when it comes to training. What I find, is that both caregivers and clients are satisfied with the training that they receive in the classroom setting, and see no need for more classroom based training. Where we do see a need for more training is in the area of hands-on, one-on-one training specific to a particular client and that individual's needs. It is one thing to learn personal care tasks and transfers in a classroom setting, and it's another thing to apply that learning when faced with a real person. I believe that some modifications to the current Fundamentals curriculum could benefit everyone, there are areas where the curriculum falls short or is confusing based on the care setting. The different care settings and client types need to be addressed in training specific to that environment or that individual. Fundamentals of Caregiving cannot be a one size fits all curriculum.

If training is to be increased, it needs to be in the area of practical hands-on training. Peer mentoring is a great way to address this need, as is the use of supervisors to provide specific training in the actual client home. I do not believe that more classroom training will enhance the skills of our caregivers, nor will it improve the quality of care. A few additional hours allowed as needed for hands on one-on-one training will do more to improve the skills and quality of care than many additional hours of classroom training.

Very successful caregivers, who have worked in this field for years, find the idea of a newly required certification that requires hours of additional classroom training to be offensive. They do not support the concept of an imposed "career ladder." If one has worked 10, 20, or 30 years as a caregiver; you have already made a career of it and you are most likely a very skilled and compassionate person. If a certification process becomes required, successful long term caregivers should be grandfathered into the certification without requiring hours and hours of additional training.

The other significant issue is the bifurcation of the training program, by providing some through a Taft-Hartley trust and the rest in a yet to be identified method. This is an economy of scale issue particularly in rural areas. It is not cost effective to offer a Fundamentals class for less than 8 students. In this rural area, many times we only have 8 students in a class. If half of those students are IPs and receive their training through the trust, we can no longer afford to offer a class for the remaining 4 students. In that case, the student may be forced to travel a greater distance (at the expense of their employer) or they may not be able to meet the deadline for when Fundamentals must be completed. Either way, this has a dramatic impact on an agency's ability to staff appropriately for client care needs.

I would advocate for minor improvements in the current training system rather than the massive changes proposed in HB 2284. HB 2284 does not make sense for the caregivers, the individuals receiving care and it is definitely not a wise use of the limited state resources available for training.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for reading this email.

Robin A. Gibson
Director, Adult Care & Nutrition Services
Olympic Community Action Programs
228 W. 1st St., Suite J, Port Angeles, WA 98362

360-452-4727 Fax: 360-457-4331
email: rgibson@olycap.org
website: www.olycap.org