



ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Addictions • Mental Health • Developmental Disabilities

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Washington County Behavioral Health &
Developmental Disabilities Division

April 2, 2015

TO: Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and
Early Childhood

RE: Support of SB 777

The Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP) supports
SB 777, which implements the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act in
Oregon.

AOCMHP's membership includes 32 Community Developmental Disability Programs
(CDDPs) across Oregon -- often the first contacts in the community for people with
I/DD. CDDP programs are operated by either local government, usually through
Community Mental Health Programs, or by not-for-profit entities that contract with local
government or directly with the State. CDDPs help assure the protection and safety of
over 22,000 Oregonians with I/DD in collaboration with families and providers.

The ABLE Act allows families the opportunity to set up a tax-exempt 529A savings
account under IRS for disability-related expenses. Families who have children with
disabilities will be able to supplement their federal disability benefits and plan for the
future. Families can save for or have access to more employment supports, housing
expenses, education services not covered such as tuition and tutors, transportation
including purchase of or modification of vehicles, health related costs and assistive
technology.

A critical benefit is that individuals will no longer risk loss of their Supplemental
Security Income and other benefits as the ABLE Act disregards the current \$2000 cap
on savings. This is not only an incentive to support individuals become more self-
sufficient and independent, but helps families invest in their sons and daughters'
futures as they would for any of their other children.

We urge you to pass SB 777 and join the 5 states that have passed legislation and 31
states with pending legislation and support the 22,000 Oregonians with disabilities and
their families to achieve greater independence and have a "real life" in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 777.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jane Owens

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