

## Oregon Resource Association

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**TO: Co-Chair Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward  
Co-Chair Representative Dan Rayfield  
Joint Subcommittee on Human Services**

**FROM: Maren Gibson/Training Director/Oregon Resource Association**

**Date: March 28, 2017**

**RE: DHS Budget - SB5526**

What is it like to be a person with a developmental disability? What does it feel like, look like; how is life for this population, for our neighbors, family, friends and fellow community members with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities? Imagine, take 15 seconds to think, what a day would be like if you had one, or two, or three developmental disabilities. Imagine what putting on your pants is like when you have a 30 second delay between telling your leg to move and your leg actually moving. Imagine eating breakfast when you have seizures every minute where you lose control of your whole entire body for 2 seconds then slowly regain it.

I can't answer that question with certainty; I can only share my experiences with people in that position. As a sister of an amazing woman named Reed with Down syndrome, as a Direct Support Professional for 15 years, as a Case Manager, as a Trainer and Coach; I can tell you two things that are certain. People with developmental disabilities are people, who experience ups and downs, who deserve the best support in the most vulnerable times of their lives. Secondly, there are no two people with disabilities that are the same. What works for the person on my right, will not work for the person on my left.

I have supported people as a DSP that have wonderfully loving families who have helped them grow up in a healthy fashion with guidance, a caring community, resources and healthy expectations. I have also supported people that were locked in closets as children, and only fed dog food. People have all different pasts. The important place to guide our attention to is their future. With comprehensive services being the most flexible and encompassing support we can provide, we need to assure this option maintains possible. There is no denying it, some people with developmental disabilities cannot live on their own, with family or with friends. We need comprehensive services in Oregon and they are shutting down because they are not funded at a rate that is sustainable.

The fact remains, people come with all different struggles, diagnosis, histories and futures. They come with different needs, preferences, desires and goals. The State of Oregon has done extremely well to partner with comprehensive service agencies to support people moving out of institutions and into their communities. Oregon's comprehensive system provides the opportunity for people to experience life, no matter what their disability is, which is something to be proud of. Today, group homes in Oregon support everything from administering medication to saving someone's life when they jump into traffic. From teaching people how to manage their anger to navigating the health care system. Oregonians with Developmental Disabilities need and deserve a support system that can manage their best and worst days. Many provider agencies in Oregon have been trying to achieve the same goal for the last 30 years, which is to support the best lives possible for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in their communities.

Oregon needs to support all options with sustainable models that encourage growth, support informed risk and provide a safe environment where people can achieve the best version of themselves. I ask that you not forget about or minimize the enormous need that comprehensive services and group homes fulfill. We, as agencies, DSPs, family members and as a trainer myself, all know that the difference between an expensive, damaging crisis and just another day of learning for a person with a developmental disability. The difference is a well-trained, committed, Direct Support Professional, that is employed by an agency with a mission to support our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time and effort on this difficult situation. Please recognize we need more, not less.

Maren Gibson

