

DATE: April 4, 2017

TO: Senate Human Services Committee Chairperson Sara Gelser and Committee Members

FROM: Jerry Bird – Salem, OR 97306

RE: Support for Oregon Senate Bill 841, 2017 Regular Session

Dear Senate Human Services Committee Chairperson Sara Gelser and Committee Members:

My name is Jerry Bird. I am blind and have been in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) in Oregon for 30 years, or more. I am writing to share with you my support for Senate Bill 841 as I believe this proposed legislation, along with the amendments that have been submitted to Legislative Counsel for review, will help create more job opportunities for the blind in Oregon.

Oregon has around 70% unemployment rate for blind people. The Oregon Commission for the Blind needs to be utilizing their authority and priority under state Statutes to create more jobs for the blind. Furthermore, the Oregon Commission for the Blind must be monitored by legislators to ensure they are doing their jobs for the benefit and support of the blind rights to employment opportunities in Oregon, and the purposes of the Business Enterprise Program are being met. I also believe that as blind business men and women that we need to retain the right to choose the best model for our individual businesses that fulfills the needs of the customers we serve.

The proposed legislation does all of this, while promoting and expanding new opportunities within the Business Enterprise Program for blind Oregonians, which is why I support Senate Bill 851 and I respectfully request your support of it as well.

Thank much for your time and concern.

Jerry Bird

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