

March 5, 2019

TO: House Democratic Leader Jennifer Williamson, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director
RE: Support for HB 2014

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is Oregon's nonprofit Protection and Advocacy office that provides legal-based advocacy to Oregonians with disabilities. DRO does not engage in tort litigation and rarely seeks monetary compensation for our clients. All of our clients have a disability that may have arisen at birth or through the effects of physical or emotional trauma, physical injury or illness.

Whenever and however a disability arises, it may have a profound effect upon a person's perception of and expectation for their life. It may disrupt their family, intimate relationships, friendships and community. There may be significant financial challenges, difficulties in finding housing, transportation and need assistance with activities of daily living. Heightened depression and anxiety are not uncommon. Pain management may be limited, causing irritability and anger. Marriages may fall apart due to the added strain of the additional challenges of having a disabled child, spouse or parent.

In my 30 plus years working at DRO, I have seen this pattern of stress and disruption have a devastating effect and, all too often, cause the break-up of families. Frankly, some survivors feel that this is not what they signed up for when they got married or had a family.

People with disabilities can and do achieve full and satisfying lives. Even so, the statistics are daunting. The unemployment rate for those with disabilities who are ready, willing and able to work is persistently twice that of other workers. Studies show a pay disparity of 37% between workers with and without disabilities. Loss of economic freedom may be emotionally devastating to a formerly self-reliant individual.

DRO urges passage of HB 2014 which recognizes and seeks to address these realities.