

03/11/2019

Regarding HB 2802

Thank-you for allowing me to testify on HB2802 which establishes a healthy homes program for low-income individuals requiring repair and rehabilitation of their existing home. My name is Laura Noppenberger and I am the Executive Director of Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage. Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage (EOSSB) is one of 14 Brokerages that comprise the Oregon Support Services Association (OSSA) serving almost 8,000 people who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities residing in their own homes and communities across Oregon. Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage (EOSSB) serves 470 people who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in 13 Eastern Oregon Counties.

All 14 Brokerages assist people who experience disabilities to plan for whole lives, address health and safety issues, find meaningful employment, and achieve greater independence. A great majority of the individuals we support rely on Medicaid and waiver funding to remain in their own homes and out of more costly levels of care. Individuals accessing Medicaid and waived services must be within income restrictions to remain eligible for in-home services which often pose challenges. People we support sometimes require home modifications and environmental modifications to remain in their own homes. Medicaid covers home modifications and environmental modifications but does not cover basic wear and tear, dry rot, asbestos abatement, and normal damage incurred over time. These restrictions often create issues in the process of addressing modifications in family homes.

For example, EOSSB is supporting a person in Union County who is medically fragile, requires twenty-four hour round the clock care, experiences seizures, is a high fall risk when transferring, and resides with her single mother in a manufactured home. They need a new ramp built to assist her in entering and exiting from the home, however their existing ramp/deck sits above an existing drainage/creek bed which causes the support pillars to shift over time and has caused the deck to deteriorate. EOSSB has worked with the Office of Developmental Disability Services on multiple occasions to design a ramp that will allow the person to exit in case of an emergency but because the existing ramp/deck were built over a creek bed and the deck is in poor condition we are unable to move forward in addressing this critical need. The deck/ramp are all one existing structure. There is no way to build a ramp that is independent from the decking and traverses the existing drainage/creek area without also addressing the deck which would be considered in poor repair. The healthy homes bill would allow the mother to apply for additional financial support to address the whole situation with the assistance of Medicaid funds to address the ramp portion which is disability related.

We have another individual situation occurring in Umatilla County where the person's mother lifts her in and out of the existing tub and it's unsafe. She requires a bathroom remodel to remove the existing bathtub and replace with a shower, and a higher toilet. This also requires fixing the wall where a window exists to put the shower in and modifying the existing structure to ensure safe bathing. The family has been informed that because they live in an older home they will be required to complete asbestos and lead based testing prior to the adaptation moving forward. This individual resides with a single mother who is unable to afford the testing and potential asbestos abatement. The Healthy Homes program could help with paying for the testing, potential abatement, and lead based testing which would allow Medicaid/waiver funds to pay for the bathroom remodel and maintain this person in her existing home. Medicaid funds will only pay for the disability related items that address the health and safety or increased independence of the person.

The Healthy Homes program would be an invaluable asset to people when home modifications or environmental modifications are required to maintain someone in their existing placement. Often additional home repairs are identified through the scope writing process or construction process and this program would allow for those items to be addressed. The Oregon Support Services Association and EOSSB are fully in support of the Healthy Homes program as it prevents costly higher levels of care, out of home placement, and supports people's dignity to have their needs addressed while supporting greater independence and choice.

I humbly thank-you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of HB2802.