

May 13, 2019

TO: Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Policy Consultant  
RE: Support for SB 24A with additional amendments

Representative Williamson and Members of the Committee:

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is the Protection and Advocacy System for Oregon. It has provided legal-based advocacy services to Oregonians with disabilities since 1977.

DRO supports SB 24A with additional amendments that have been developed by a work group that includes the many stakeholders in the Aid and Assist process.

It is critical that new procedures and local mental health restorative services be developed in order to honor the constitutional rights of defendants who have been found unable to aid and assist in their criminal proceedings, to make prudent use of precious and expensive state hospital resources, to support the recovery of defendant with behavioral health needs and to protect public safety.

SB 24A will not accomplish these goals by itself. The bill is designed to encourage local courts to use a wider array of options to address the restoration of defendants found unable to aid and assist and to resolve their cases. However, without more robust local treatment options, courts will simply not have the options they need.

Oregon has been slow to take meaningful action to address the flood of defendants, and particularly misdemeanants, who have been presented to the state hospital. With the development of local treatment options, we can create a more humane and effective system of restoration and case resolution. SB 24A, with additional amendments, will assist in addressing this critical problem.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 24A with additional amendments.