

Testimony to the Ways and Means Subcommittee/March 11, 2021
Support of State Long Term Care Ombudsman and Public Guardian Programs

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The Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens and United Seniors of Oregon, state affiliates of the National Council on Aging, want to express our strong support for the expanded funding of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Oregon Public Guardianship and Conservatorship Program within the 2021-2023 biennial budget, including the additional staff recommended in the Governor's Budget.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program has been extremely effective as the citizen's watch-dog for the rights of long term care/residential care facility residents in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult foster homes, and residential care facilities. They have hundreds of statutorily empowered volunteer ombudsmen and other volunteers who have been placed around the state to provide effective and timely response to the thousands of complaints received during each biennium. The majority of complaints are resolved without the involvement of other state and federal regulatory bodies, but they also have strong partnerships with the Aging and People with Disabilities/DHS and the local area agencies on aging and disabilities.

The LTC Ombudsman Program, under the accomplished leadership of Fred Steele, continues to make major contributions to the oversight and watchdog efforts and protocols within residential care facilities and other long term care policies and programs around the state, in their very capable representation of long term care/residential care facility residents. The US Department of Health and Human Services has long recognized the Oregon program as one of the most successful LTC Ombudsman Programs in the nation.

Problems within residential care/long term care facilities will not go away. This is why it is vital that the LTC Ombudsman Program continue its strong statewide monitoring efforts to insure that an adequate level of care is being provided to all residents and that there is an ability to respond effectively to protect the rights of these seniors and people with disabilities.

Oregon long term care/residential care residents continue to be served and protected at exemplary levels by the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. We urge your support for full and expanded funding.

We also want to express our strong support for the expansion of the Oregon Public Guardian & Conservator Program, as proposed in the Governor's Recommended Budget.

This \$1.7 million investment would add 6 FTE and would double the caseload capacity, which has been at full capacity the last two years, with many at-risk, low-income clients denied critically needed guardian and/or conservatorship services. The Oregon Public Guardian Chris Rosin and his able staff do great work in protecting highly vulnerable adults who face terrible abuse, neglect or self-neglect, and continue to work closely with their clients, often for the remainder of their lives. They have important partnerships with hospitals, the Oregon State Hospital and law enforcement. OPG is able to address critical, unmet care needs of their clients that can reduce and/or control the issues that ensnares them in the criminal justice system or lands them inappropriately in local hospitals, ERs, and/or mental health institutions.

We urge the Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee to support the expansion of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Oregon Public Guardian Program. Thank you for your consideration.