

Statement of Laurie Ehlhardt Powell in Support of SB 700

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

As a speech-language pathologist, researcher, and advocate working in the field of brain injury rehabilitation, I'm writing to express my strong support for SB 700, which will establish a brain injury service coordination program in Oregon.

I've worked with and heard from numerous survivors of brain injury and their family members, nearly all of whom have endured unnecessary hardships in attempting to coordinate, mostly on their own, the care they need.

While each individual and brain injury is unique, it is very common to experience cognitive challenges, such as memory impairment and difficulty with organization and planning, which are the very skills one needs to navigate a complex healthcare system.

Further, brain injury is often associated with mental health and/or substance use challenges, which complicate access to care. Without appropriate, culturally sensitive, coordinated treatment to address all of these issues, individuals often experience repeated visits to emergency rooms, homelessness, and/or incarceration.

A brain injury service (resource) coordinator (e.g., licensed social worker with specific training and expertise in this area) would be the "navigator" through our complex system of care in partnership with the individual with brain injury and family members. The service coordinator would be highly familiar with various agencies and resources available within the individual's region as well as those statewide and can help facilitate the person-centered connections and supports on an on-going basis that otherwise would never be made.

Several other states have robust brain injury resource coordination programs and are demonstrating strong, positive outcomes (e.g., Indiana, return to work). Now is the time for Oregon to do the same.

Sincerely,

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