

Comments to the record for the Honorable Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery Committee

My "What would Kathryn have done?" Story

Kathryn Weit - a beautiful friend, an educator of thousands, a mother also a fierce, courageous, determined, relentless, and generous advocate for the Oregon IDD community. She was a visionary for acceptance of all regardless of abilities. No matter how you may have known Kathryn you learned how to love and appreciate her. She was a mother of two wonderful children often sharing their stories of successes and failures. She constantly taught others of the principles and concepts of what it takes to be a good advocate for the IDD community. Her many years of working with the Oregon IDD community and the Oregon legislature led to monumental changes in lives of Oregonians. This includes the final closing of the last two Oregon institutions for the IDD and the monumental planning process for instituting the decisions from the Staley/Waitlist lawsuit.

The planning committee for the Waitlist Lawsuit was my first opportunity to work with and learn who Kathryn was. This was also my first experience in the value of advocacy to bring about important change in all our lives. She participated for several years as an outstanding leader, planner and teacher in the Oregon Partners In Policymaking program. It was in this program that I along with many other Oregonians first came to know and appreciate Kathryn while developing an understanding of the "what, why, and how" to be a better advocate for change.

These experiences along with 8 years of working closely with Kathryn on the Oregon Council on Development Disabilities have had a tremendous impact on not just me but my entire family and circle of friends. Often while experiencing some particular problem or issue impacting my life as a parent of an individual with multiple developmental disabilities, I simply take the time to ask, "what would Kathryn do?". She would help to bring about change for the good of all Oregonians. Kathryn's legacy continues to advance inclusion for the benefit of all Oregonians no matter what abilities we have.

Joe H Carroll