

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery Committee,

My name is Alison Holley, and I am a parent of two young children experiencing disabilities. I am writing in support of Senate Resolution 201 to honor Kathryn Weit.

Throughout her life, Kathryn worked tirelessly and passionately to improve the lives of people experiencing disability. Because of Kathryn's hard work, both of my children have received quality early childhood programs. My oldest, Albee, received Early Childhood Special Education services, experienced a smooth transition to kindergarten (covid notwithstanding of course) and is now thriving in his general education first grade classroom. My youngest, Luna, received Early Intervention services and is now being supported by Early Childhood Special Education services in her community preschool. Throughout her time receiving services, her skills have exploded and her progress has been breathtaking. So much of this may not have been possible without Kathryn's advocacy.

But it isn't just my children's current access to supports and services that I reflect on when I think about Kathryn; it's also the possibilities they'll have access to in their futures. Kathryn's work shutting down Fairview and advocating for the redistribution of funds to support community immersion for individuals with disabilities will continue to impact Albee's and Luna's lives as they grow into adulthood. Prior to Kathryn's profound impact on disability policy, Albee, who experiences autism and epilepsy, may have grown up without the same opportunities to live and be treated as the wonderful, valuable member of the community I know he is becoming. Society may have segregated him from the rest of the community, cut off from opportunities to engage and contribute.

A key point that is often forgotten when thinking about community inclusion is that fully inclusive communities, made vibrant by people with and without disabilities, are not only beneficial for people experiencing disabilities. They are beneficial for everyone because of the unique skills and qualities that people with disabilities bring to communities. Kathryn did not just improve the lives of individuals with disabilities; she improved the lives and communities of ALL people. Please join me in celebrating her legacy by supporting Senate Resolution 201.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alison Holley
alison@factoregon.org
Portland, OR