

February 1, 2022

I am submitting this testimony in **FULL support of Senate Resolution 201** in memoriam of Kathryn Weit, 1947-2021. I met Kathryn in the late 1980's when Oregon was beginning to plan how we would comply with the new requirements in IDEA to extend the mandate for IDEA services to children starting at age 3 years and consider extending the mandate for services to birth. Oregon already had a statewide system of services for birth to 5 year old children with developmental delays and disabilities but it was limited in funding and scope. Because of this existing system, we had stakeholders all over Oregon, with experience and services to leverage in the planning process. A statewide process to get community input on the values and structure that was critical to success as well as opportunities for training and technical assistance on some of the new requirements. Kathryn was one of the key architects of this comprehensive and ambitious undertaking and I teamed up with her to make it happen. This built the foundation of the legislation that was written and introduced to the 1991 Oregon Legislature. Kathryn's knowledge of the legislative process and her skills at building statewide grassroots advocates and coalitions of varied interest groups propelled the legislation mandating services for children to 3 years of age. The following legislative session- in 1993 – we came back with legislation which extended the mandates to birth. The legislation passed the Oregon legislature with a unanimous “yes” vote which is a testimony to Kathryn's abilities as an advocate and champion for things she really believed in. These laws are known as the Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) laws.

Kathryn led the effort to write the EI/ECSE law in an innovative way which ensured compliance with the federal IDEA requirements AND included a section on policies which reflected the values and intent to guide the implementation of services and supports as expressed by statewide families and advocates. Some of the values Kathryn insisted be written into the statute included a seamless birth to 5 year old system, identifying services as early as possible, and that services and supports be community based, family centered and coordinated.

Each year Kathryn lead the efforts for increased and adequate funds for EI/ECSE. She helped create the Alliance for Early Intervention (AEI) to lead the grass roots advocacy efforts for EI/ECSE programs. Kathryn in partnership with AEI, planned and executed huge statewide events each year with hundreds of parents descending on the capitol for “The Teddy Bear Picnic” event where we gave each legislator a bear, and the “Piece of the Pie even” where we delivered pieces of homemade pies to legislators. Representative Buckley, the chair of Ways and Means, called on Kathryn as a trusted advocate to gather the right people to develop a funding formula for EI/ECSE which is still used today to identify funding needs and gaps.

Kathryn travelled with me to Eastern Europe to train and support disability leaders, families and self advocates and community advocates to organize effective and sustainable advocacy structures to ensure equal rights and access for people with disabilities in their countries. This work has really made a difference in advancing laws and funding in these countries.

Kathryn was a force for positive changes in the disability community and the most effective advocate I have known. She was a mentor to me, a colleague, my campaign co-chair and trusted advisor and a very close and dear friend. **This is a really well deserved honor!**

Sincerely,  
Judy Newman, [Judynewman1950@gmail.com](mailto:Judynewman1950@gmail.com)

