



Your Life. Your Voice.

February 3, 2022

To: Sen. Gelser Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

From: Gabrielle Guedon, Executive Director, Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition

RE: Support for SR 201 Honoring Kathryn Weit and how she helped people with developmental disabilities and their families.

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Sen. Gelser Blouin and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition is a statewide coalition that supports 18 local groups. All of our members experience developmental disabilities (DD). We bring self-advocates together so they can speak with one voice about things that matter to them.

With Kathryn Weit's help, we made a vision for self-advocates. Our vision is that Oregonians with DD have self-determination in their lives. To us, self-determination means that people with DD:

- Set their own goals
- choose where they live in their communities
- have the lives they want,
- have the job they want,
- live with people they choose, and
- have healthcare and supports they need to be independent.

Kathryn Weit helped us use our voices. She helped us make self-determination real by making other people listen to us when we said what we wanted in our lives.

Kathryn helped self-advocates be recognized as leaders in our lives and as leaders in making changes to services that support us. She taught us that to change things we need to work together.

We know the history of Fairview and what happened there because Kathryn taught us that. Fairview was wrong. Communities are better when people with DD are members. Kathryn worked to make sure we could have support to build real lives in our communities. We thank her for that.

Many of us were part of the Partners in Policymaking classes Kathryn taught. She made sure we were supported to open the eyes of parents in the class so they could



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recognize that their kids with disabilities could graduate, get a job and live in the community just like anyone else. Now, those parents will raise strong self-advocates to join us in our advocacy.

Before meeting Kathryn, many of us felt we were not able to voice our feelings and wishes. This made us scared of how we felt and what we wanted. But, Kathryn helped us advocate for ourselves and others. We are not scared anymore. We will keep working to make change and have our voices heard.

Without Kathryn, many of us would not have places to live where we can be supported to be successful. We would not have jobs or be community members. We would be invisible.

Today, we see more people with DD in our communities and doing things that were not possible before Kathryn. They are living where they want, working in their community. We want the next generation to have better opportunities than we had. Because of Kathryn, we know how to build leaders. We know the new leaders will keep changing the system.