



Oregon Council on
Developmental Disabilities

BETTER TOGETHER

Thursday, February 3rd, 2022

RE: Senate Resolution 201: Honoring Kathryn Weit
From: Emilie Wylde Turner, Medford, OR.

Chair Gelsner Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery Committee:

I first met Kathryn when my son Parker was a year and a half old. It was my very first time at the Oregon Capitol and I was a terrified parent, pleading before a committee, not to make cuts to Early Intervention Services that were critically important to our family. After I spoke, she walked up to me, introduced herself and said, "I'm going need you to tell your story later this week to Ways and Means". Fun fact: I had no idea what "Ways and Means" even meant. But even at that point, this stranger had the ability to get me to say yes.

That was the power of Kathryn.

Kathryn was an incredible force. She had this ability to identify strengths within parents and call them to action before they even realized they were ready themselves. She would see a small ember of a fire in these advocates and help add the kindling of values that would build it into a hot burning flame. When we would stray off course, which happened from time to time, Kathryn would always bring us back these critical values that should be the cornerstone of all that we do.

Kathryn constantly taught us to dream bigger, expect more and never settle. When we celebrated a goal met or an unexpected success, Kathryn would celebrate alongside us and then follow up with the question "Where do we go from here?".

It was under her guidance that the Family-to-Family Networks were a dream, then a plan and eventually a reality. Thousands of families are impacted because of the passion and drive of Kathryn and that ripple effect will go on for generations.

Kathryn was always the first to point out when there was not the perspective of lived experience at decision making tables. She firmly pushed that people with disabilities should be leading conversations about policies that impacted their lives. Her constant reminders to know and remember our history is one of the most impactful lessons that she ever taught me and has impacted leaders and advocates across Oregon.

Kathryn's legacy will live on for generations. My son's future will look different because of her impact on the state, leaders, advocates, and communities. I will forever be changed because of her dedication get down to the basic principle that communities are not complete until they include everyone.