



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

830 D Street NE

Salem, OR 97301-1212

Toll Free: 1-800-522-2602

Phone: 503-378-6533

Fax: 503-373-0852

TTY 711

ltco.info@rights.oregon.gov

www.oltco.org

May 4, 2023

Senator Wlnsvey Campos, Co-chair
Representative Andrea Valderrama, Co-Chair
Ways & Means, Subcommittee on Human Services
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 5520 Work Session

Co-chairs and members of the Committee,

Thank you for your consideration and passage of our agency budget bill at your May 3, 2023 committee hearing. With the questions asked during the discussion of the bill, I am providing this follow-up letter for some additional information should it be helpful to committee members.

Question 1: How will the agency meet Key Performance Measure (KPM) #5's goal of 28,000 volunteer hours annually given the most recent reporting of only 12,183 volunteer hours for 2021-2022, and within the budget proposed for 2023-2025?

Response: Thank you for Rep. Diehl's and the committee's focus on our community volunteers and the service they provide in communities throughout Oregon. Ombudsman volunteers are extraordinarily dedicated community individuals who have been providing supports for those living in long-term care facilities for over 40 years. As Mr. Gregory Jolivette shared during the May 3rd work session, the total number of volunteer hours have been down significantly in recent years due to the impacts of COVID. Those impacts, among many, have included restrictions on the ability of volunteers to enter facilities during COVID outbreaks and general concerns of our volunteers to enter facilities due to the fact so many of our volunteers are also older adults who we know to be particularly susceptible to the worst outcomes from COVID.

However, the overall commitment of these community volunteers has not wavered, and our overall volunteer hours continues to rise the further we move away from the worst of the COVID pandemic. Additionally, since October 2020 when the agency re-initiated our volunteer training program, we have trained and certified over 100 new volunteer Ombudsmen. Our expectation is that it might still be a few years before we can reach the goal of 28,000 volunteer

Mission: To protect individual rights, promote independence, and ensure quality of life for Oregonians living in long-term care and residential facilities and for Oregonians with decisional limitations.

hours, but the program and our community volunteers continue to be dedicated to serving those living in long-term care.

Question 2: Is the Public Guardian program, with the additional investments of 6.0 FTE in the 2021 legislative session, working?

As confirmed by Mr. Gregory Jolivette during the May 3rd Work Session, the Public Guardian program was not a new program in 2021, but rather the legislative investments that session were an acknowledgement that the program has been quite effective and necessary in serving very vulnerable adult Oregonians – those generally facing imminent harm or even death if not for public guardianship. The Public Guardian program provides services to those experiencing significant cognitive disability with no finances to pay for a professional guardian and no one else in their lives to serve as a supportive, court-appointed decision-maker. Individuals court-appointed to be served by the public guardianship program are immediately connected to human, health, and social services as well as provided housing in an appropriate state-licensed setting, resulting in an individual who can be quickly stabilized in their life.

In addition to the services for vulnerable individuals, our agency presentation to the Committee on February 23, 2023 includes a slide entitled, “Major Impacts for System Partners,” which summarizes the program’s positive systemic impacts in Oregon including for local hospitals, law enforcement, the Oregon State Hospital, Adult Protective Services, and care facilities and case management.

Question 3: Is there a connection between public guardianship and the aid and assist population?

The quick answer is, yes – the Oregon Public Guardian (OPG) program has been able to provide in-depth support to some individuals deemed unable to aid and assist in their defense. The Public Guardian program has been working with both advocates and district attorneys offices when an individual is recognized as someone who can benefit from public guardianship. The supports provided by OPG, as summarized in the answer to question 2 above, can stabilize an individual and nearly eliminate contacts with law enforcement, local hospitals, the State Hospital, and related systems impacted by an individual suffering from severe and persistent mental illness.

If interested in a more detailed overview, the OPG program director, Chris Rosin, presented to the Senate Judiciary committee on March 23, 2023 for SB 380-A, focused on the role the Public Guardian program provides with aid and assist situations.

Thank you again for your support of the services our programs provide to Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Fred Steele, MPH, JD
Agency Director