

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Helfrich, Vice Chair Gamba, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today as a parent of a child with a developmental disability and as someone who works to create opportunity and integration for other children and adults who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Everyone deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. Unfortunately, in our state, we know that too many of our neighbors and community members are experiencing housing instability or homelessness. People who experience I/DD are most likely to live at home, in a group home, or in another segregated setting that limits their potential. In 2012 Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius said that all Americans have “the right to live in a home of their choosing, with people with whom they care about, that is integrated into a community that values their participation & contributions.” Eleven years later, people with I/DD remain “statistically invisible in planning and community development.” (CHFA Neuro-inclusive Housing report: <https://www.chfainfo.com/getattachment/76f4c2c6-df9e-43af-8a76-c7823de487c8/Neuro-InclusiveHousingWhitepaper.pdf>).

As a parent, I have been told by countless doctors, case workers, and others that my plan for my daughter should be to take care of her at home forever. My daughter - like all people with I/DD - deserves to live in an integrated community setting that supports her independence and potential, but today, Oregon is not planning for that type of housing for her.

In Oregon, the current Fair Market Rent (FMR) or average cost for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,438. To afford rent and utilities at this rate, without paying more than 30% of income on housing (the federal standard for affordability), a household must earn \$4,793 every month. This price point is out of range for most individuals with I/DD, who often live primarily or entirely on Social Security Income (SSI), \$914 monthly.

HB 2889 will be an essential step forward for our state in terms of planning for needed housing and affordable housing. However, there are some important shortcomings that particularly exist for people with I/DD that need to be addressed in this important legislation.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, because they rely on Social Security Income, need support paying rent. They need access to housing vouchers that allow them to pay only a portion (typically one-third) of their income towards rent while picking up the remaining cost. Today, unfortunately only one in four people who are eligible for this type of assistance nationwide receive assistance. People with I/DD may also need other supports to live independently - currently, the State provides case management and other necessary support to people through the Developmental Disability system. People may also need accessible apartments to allow a wheelchair or other mobility device, or they may need adaptive equipment or modifications to support their independent living.

Today, the data collected by DLCD and OHCS is incomplete because people with I/DD are not explicitly included, and therefore they and their needs are erased from the data. To provide housing for people with I/DD, we need to begin to work on all fronts, including collecting better data and providing it to people who are planning for housing. The CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics have both shared that the number of individuals being diagnosed with I/DD is

growing faster than the general population growth. While people with I/DD make up 1-3% of the national population, research suggests that 30-40% of homeless persons experience I/DD, and this rate continues to grow as we ignore housing solutions for this population.

There are three recommendations I have to modify HB 2889 to improve the housing circumstances of people with I/DD:

- First, share data across agencies. Department of Human Services Office of Developmental Disability Services (DHS ODDS) has comprehensive data on the number of people receiving services for I/DD in our state and where they live. While incomplete because some people do not access services, sharing this data between DHS ODDS and DLCD would be a critical first step to better understanding the current housing situation of people with I/DD and to begin planning for their needs. DHS ODDS needs to identify the number of people with I/DD in each county, along with their income and current housing situation, and share that information with DLCD.
- Second, local governments must access this data to plan for needed housing for people with I/DD in their communities.
- Third, local jurisdictions and the state should consider accessibility as one key piece of supporting people with I/DD, but should also consider adaptability, modifications, and ways to support those adaptations financially. Accessibility is not the only key for people with I/DD.

People with I/DD deserve to live in integrated communities and not be segregated into group homes or experience homelessness. The state should plan for their needs, which should be required as part of HB 2889.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Heidi Robinson

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