

Submitter: Suzanne Witter

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human
Services

Measure: SB5503

I strongly support SB 5530 which increases funding for the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB).

OCB has several programs that help many Oregonians improve their lives daily. The OCB program through which I receive help is "Independent Living for Seniors with Low Vision."

My experience with OCB is completely positive. All of the staff I have met are very caring, kind, knowledgeable and professional. They are also efficient, organized, and timely in scheduling appointments, returning calls and providing help/services. Very helpful dedicated people!

It isn't surprising then, with this outstanding group that they are able to positively change lives, such as mine. I developed cataracts in 1997, at age 45, had surgery, developed glaucoma, and then had numerous retinal detachments. I had at least seven surgeries before I lost total vision in my left eye. I now have a prosthesis for my left eye. My right eye also had retinal detachments and significant reduction in vision. I have had at least six surgical procedures on my right eye to preserve the remaining vision. I was no longer able to read books, recipes, writing on appliances, signs or merchandise descriptions and prices in stores.

Specialist Ashley visited our home within one week of our contacting OCB.

There are two important advantages of this first meeting being in the client's home. First, the OCB specialist could more effectively advise us on the best ways for us to accomplish home tasks. Ashley's clearly presented valuable information tips, resource suggestions, and information were most beneficial. Her suggestions increased space and safety of movement in our home. She placed raised, colored touch dots on numerous surfaces to cue for on/off switches. She gave many tips for how to do tasks that were simple when I had full sight. She presented many resources including support groups and supplies. Her attitude of optimism and "we can help/make this better" was contagious.

The second advantage was actually trying out optical aids and being happily shocked at the improvement in my vision. I couldn't believe it – I could read! I have been given a new lease on life by using an OCB supplied lighted magnifier and yellow plastic cover sheet. This is especially significant when used in stores or restaurants. I feel I have regained the ability to do some of the things I had previously done. I have even been able to read lesson plan ideas to teach Sunday school.

To immediately have in-hand optical aids was positive, powerful, and provided life changing reinforcement that I could again contribute more to my community, be more independent, and feel more self-fulfillment.

I am most grateful for this OCB program and staff. I encourage the Oregon

Legislature to continue its support and increase funding for the Oregon Commission for the Blind.