



Testimony in support of SB 5520 Long-Term Care Ombudsman

February 23, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), representing CMHPs statewide, who manage the local behavioral health safety net and provide a wide array of services in their communities, I would like to express our strong support for SB 5520. Additionally, we are particularly supportive of increased investments in the Oregon Public Guardian Program to provide much needed public guardianships for our community members with serious mental illness and co-occurring intellectual/developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, or physical conditions, many of whom are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Oregon Public Guardian Program provides an essential service for certain community members who cycle in and out of the Oregon State Hospital (OSH), jail and acute care hospitals or who are found never able to aid and assist in their own defense. Increasing the numbers of public guardians with adequate funding is one recommendation AOCMHP has put forward to OHA to reduce the numbers of Aid & Assist clients at OSH. This is an important piece of the puzzle necessary to improve the quality of life and outcomes for this group of people, a small but costly population.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 5520 and to advocate for increased investment in the public guardian program.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez
Executive Director, AOCMHP