



Oregon
Community
Brokerages

February 7, 2024

To: Sen Gelser-Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Katie Rose, Executive Director, Oregon Community Brokerages

Re: Neutral on SB 1521-1, revising Agency With Choice model for IDD services

Chair Gelser-Blouin and members of the committee,

Oregon Community Brokerages is comprised of the 14 Support Service Brokerages across Oregon. Collectively, we provide case management services to more than 7,500 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) living in their own or family homes in every community throughout the state. We connect people to what matters to them and support them to make the important decisions and choices that make up a life.

We believe that to work well, both sides of the relationship between a person with IDD and their direct support provider need to be well supported. It is important to maintain a balance of power and support to these two components of the support service relationship. We see SB 1521-1 making adjustments and enhancements to both employers and employees within three separate segments of this omnibus bill amendment: OCB is taking a neutral position on SB 1521-1, with supporting commentary.

Sections 1-2: Expand supports for employers of Personal Support Workers

Sections 3-4: Revise and continue to define Agency With Choice services

Sections 5-6: Increase fraud protections and standards for recruitment tactics within the broader IDD service system

Expanded Support for PSWs

Personal Support Workers (PSWs) have faced an increasingly complex system to navigate with growing wait-times. This impacts both the people who want to work and the people who need support in their daily lives. As Case Management Entities that support the majority of people who currently use PSWs we see a lot of ways to improve the supports and processes for PSWs. PSWs are an important feature of our self-directed support service system, and we want to see changes to better support them and ensure that they remain a viable option in the future.

We like what we see here as an affirmation and possible expansion of the currently available Employment Resource Connections (ERC) services to PSW employers. We would like to see this implemented in a way that does not duplicate and instead brings consistency and expansion to the work of ERCs. We are concerned about unnecessarily complicating our system and would like to see implementation that does not add another layer to our already complex system.

Revisions to Agency With Choice

Oregon Community Brokerages supported the passage of SB 1548 in 2022, which established Agency With Choice services for people with IDD. We wrote at the time that *“within the IDD service system, we have a variety of service and provider types that fit a variety of life circumstances and preferences. In order for this complex system to work well for the people it serves, the service and provider types should be clearly defined and explained to people making decisions for their lives.”* To get there, this service and provider type need more work to be clear and distinct from what is currently offered within the system through existing provider agencies. We are in favor of logical, efficient changes to our system that enhance people’s ability to access providers in the ways that they want to. We do not want to see duplication and confusion.

Additionally, we believe that the rates for IDD services should be reflective of our community values and considerate of the health of the overall service system. There is sweeping rate setting work directed by the legislature in 2023 currently underway within ODDS and APD to look at rates across the systems and provider types. We know that considerable time and effort is committed to this work which aims to find stability in the compensation practices of this broader workforce. We would ask that any new services, including Agency With Choice services, look to the needs of the entire community.

Fraud Protections and Recruitment Standards

We are gratified to see certain recruitment practices called out and negated by this bill. As the bill states, the only person making the choice of which agency to work with should be the person with IDD. OCB also supports the expansion of Medicaid Fraud attention to our service system. We support accountability for providers and responsible use of public funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for consideration under a neutral position on SB 1521-1.