

G. Sessions
Feb. 8, 2024
Opposing Testimony

SB 1521	Public Hearing	Modifies the enforcement by the Department of Human Services of the requirements for residential care facilities to use acuity-based staffing tools to ensure sufficient staffing levels to meet residents' scheduled and unscheduled needs at all times.
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I see so many humans who take for granted being able to speak freely, make decisions without thinking of how they will affect others who cannot advocate for themselves without support. Until it becomes a core value of Oregon to truly embrace inclusion, diversity and equality we will continue to suffer from not hearing those who don't have the opportunity to be heard.

I am opposing this bill for multiple reasons I will explain throughout this written testimony.

The way this bill has been proposed in such a quick manor without giving advocates, community members, DSP's/PSW's/Agency staff and those who would be directly affected by the changes this bill would implement; a chance to understand and assist in what would be best for us, has caused unnecessary fear for those receiving services and those who provide them.

The lack of inclusion of those this bill directly affects not only gives reason to deny moving forward but should call for an investigation as to why there was no effort to provide self advocates with the necessary information, support to communicate their concerns in a reasonable amount of time and an opportunity to have a dialogue about what would be a better option for our communities and state. Not only has the swiftness and incomplete information/evidence to support this bill caused those I personally support a lot of fear for a loss of consistency, it only confirms that those making the decisions and bills do not care about their wellbeing, opinions or seeing them succeed.

There is no evidence that creating a new Agency of Choice would provide better support for all, it means it would streamline basic/generic supports with less oversight, less personalization and potentially crumble the already amazing agencies in our state that work overtime to provide personalized safety plans, implementation strategies, supported employment, and in-home supports for independence that are tailored for each individual we support. We work with our DSP's and those we support to enhance their support in ways an overarching government led Agency would not be able to provide in a timely manner. This would cause an influx of confusion and turn over for those receiving services creating a lack of support.

This bill threatens not only my livelihood as a dedicated DSP and manager of an agency that provides everything and more this bill is proposing would potentially create, it proves there was no effort to include self advocates and their support teams. After talking to those I support, fellow support providers, agencies and family members of those in the I/DD community I propose a better solution.

SUPPORT OREGON AGENCIES!!!! Instead of a generic Agency of Choice, support local communities in creating or expanding agencies that understand their local communities needs. There is a difference in needed support to rural communities than in metropolitan areas or cities. Talk to those who need support in different parts of our state, find out what they really need. Give agencies the financial means to build community centers and relationships with local businesses for volunteering, work or independent living opportunities. Fund opportunities to create agencies or support expanding already existing agencies in smaller communities that can be on par with the bigger cities agencies in Oregon.

Create an open dialogue with current agencies and hold them accountable while supporting them. Protect those receiving services by providing a livable wage and healthcare for providers to decrease turnover rates. Give agencies the option to join a union rather than competing with them. Help agencies work together by creating a local

city fund for community spaces, events, community engagement to create less burden on individual agencies to provide their own.

By building up our community by including every member of the community, we will start to thrive in ways our world has never seen before. Stop wasting time and resources trying to create more competition with an already working structure that needs support and work with us to create realistic solutions to a better inclusive oregon. This is your opportunity to think about the decisions you make and how they affect those who cannot be heard and include them in how to support and protect them best.

Thank you for your time,

Grace Sessions