

Submitter: Glenna Hayes
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB1521

Dear Senators of the Human Rights Committee,

I am writing to you today in my capacity as a provider with 15 years of experience in two different states. I want to express my viewpoints on SB1521 Amendment -9, also known as Agency with Choice. It is important to note that I am writing this letter as an individual provider and disability advocate, and not on behalf of any organization or work you may see me do in other places of legislative advocacy.

While I strive to maintain a neutral stance on this issue, I must emphasize my concern regarding the extensive content encompassed in this bill. The bill appears to be a conglomerate of various problems, with little individual attention given to each issue. This approach does not afford the necessary intent and time needed to adequately address and resolve these crucial matters. This feels like a "sausage" bill that has been extremely hard to navigate, and those voices who need to be involved (people with disabilities) in no way can access this information. Creating laws or regulations that affect their services in a way that excludes them from participation, from ideation to implementation, is discriminatory and exclusionary towards individuals with disabilities.

The current state of the bill is quite convoluted, making it difficult for individuals such as myself to navigate. It also feels as though the voices of those directly affected by Agency with Choice have not been adequately included in the development and decision-making process. This lack of inclusion is disheartening, as the perspectives and solutions of those receiving services must be given priority. The professional relationship of a person with a disability and their provider is symbiotic, however providers get to clock out at the end of the day or get another job. People with disabilities cannot just stop needing supports and services. Why are we the ones making choices for them? This is their life, not ours.

I perceive Agency with Choice as a potential means to increase union membership, rather than as a solution to the genuine concerns and challenges faced by individuals relying on these services in the 18+ ID/DD system. In light of the provider crisis we are experiencing, it seems misguided to allocate funds towards developing a third option when we cannot even effectively maintain and staff the two current provider options. This expenditure appears wasteful and disrespectful to the advocates who have been advocating for these issues and proposing solutions for over a decade. When I say provider crisis I mean crisis, people entering into group homes due to lack of providers, some moving back in with family which can cause damage to

dynamics, and some even stopping life needed care to die.

The provider system for people with disabilities in Oregon is failing those who depend on these services. The current pay structure makes it difficult to attract providers, thus raising concerns about how we will fulfill the obligations of this proposed third option. Furthermore, it has been communicated to me directly that this bill does not enhance the workforce in any way. Therefore, it is critical to question what this bill truly seeks to accomplish and whose needs it aims to address.

Far too often, individuals with disabilities are ignored and sidelined by organizations and lawmakers who claim to have their best interests in mind. It is imperative that this pattern ceases. When Fairview closed, legislators diverted much-needed funding away from the community that had suffered under an abusive system. Unfortunately, the community never received the money confiscated by the legislators, resulting in a loss of crucial funds. It is crucial that we put an end to this practice of taking from the disability community and start listening to the voices of the individuals within this community with utmost respect and dignity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Glenna Hayes