



February 12, 2024

To: Sen. Gelser Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services
Members of the Committee

From: Leslie Sutton, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: SB 1557 Supporting children and youth with mental health support needs to access Community First Choice Services and expanding Oregon's Medically Involved and Medically Fragile Waivers

Sen. Gelser Blouin:

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 40 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equity and community integration for Oregonians with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families. Our members include a statewide coalition of people with DD, peer-based family support organizations, support services brokerages, advocacy organizations and DD providers.

People thrive when they have the support they need to succeed. This looks different for every person. The Oregon DD System is founded on the idea that each person with DD has their own goals and requires supports delivered in a way that meets those unique goals. We support SB 1557 because it will ensure more Oregon children and youth can get the support they need.

SB 1557 creates an opportunity for children and youth with mental health support needs who meet level of care, to get the support they need for Activities of Daily Living (eating, bathing, dressing) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (meal preparation, shopping, getting around the community). Decades of supporting people with DD tell us that these supports have a positive impact on how people access their communities. We have participated in and supported conversations about how these types of services can support children and youth with mental health support needs. We are excited to see SB 1557 making this a reality for children and youth with mental health support needs. We look forward to continuing to be involved in these discussions.

SB 1557 also eliminates waitlists for the Medically Involved and Medically Fragile children's waivers. These waivers offer support to families of children who have very high medical support needs. For many of these families, the waiver is their only way to access the services their child needs to thrive. Yet, these waivers have very limited numbers of openings. Current estimates say one hundred twenty families are forced to wait for a slot to open on these waivers before they can access the support they need. It can take years for a waiver slot to open.

Years ago, Oregon recognized the importance of giving people with disabilities the right support



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at the right time and in the right amount. This led to eliminating other waitlists for Developmental Disability Services. Now it is time to end the waitlists for these critical children's waivers so children can grow up with the support they need.