



Disability
Rights
Oregon

TO: Senate Human Services Committee
FROM: Ben Gurewitz, Disability Rights Oregon
DATE: January 30, 2025
RE: SB 725 Support

Chair Gelser-Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Gurewitz, and I am a Public Policy Advocate at Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 7235. We are grateful to Senator Gorsek for working with the self-advocates – those with lived experience to carry forward their priority decreasing caseloads for Service Coordinators and Personal Agents who serve people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).

Everyone needs someone in their corner. We all do better when we're navigating difficult or intimidating life situations alongside a trusted advocate. For many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon, that person is their case manager. But what happens when that person is tasked with walking alongside dozens of other people? Our case management system for people with IDD has been stretched increasingly thin over the past decade. Workloads have grown each year while funding has not kept pace.

DRO supports the self-advocates in bringing their own bill - SB 725 and the intent to center people with IDD and their desire for more responsive case management services. Case managers are a lifeline for someone who experiences an Intellectual or Developmental disability. Case Managers are always the first call for people in crisis, having a case manager available can be the difference between keeping their housing, getting the appropriate medical care, or sustaining a job.

In the early 2010s, Oregon adopted the K-Plan. This Medicaid waiver enabled Oregon to receive an enhanced match from the federal government, but it also made case management an entitlement program. All those who are eligible to receive services must get them. While this ensured that all eligible individuals received services, it also led to rapidly growing caseloads without the necessary investment to support case managers in their expanding roles.

Over the last several biennia, the case management entities have received what is roughly considered to be 86% of full funding. This has led to high caseloads for CDDPs, a lack of recruitment and retention, and insufficient opportunities for training new case managers. We are strongly supportive of increased investment in the I/DD case management system,

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which we know our friends from the CDDPs, and Brokerages will be advocating for this session.

Conclusion

Our testimony today is designed to highlight the importance of full funding for these programs. Increased investment will allow for a reduction in caseloads, more recruitment and retention efforts, and better training to ensure that Oregon can continue to provide the best possible services to individuals who experience an I/DD.

About Disability Rights Oregon

Since 1977 Disability Rights Oregon has been the State's Protection and Advocacy System.¹ We are authorized by Congress to protect, advocate, and enforce the rights of people with disabilities under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and State laws, investigate abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and "pursue administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies".² We are also mandated to "educate policymakers" on matters related to people with disabilities.³

If you have any questions regarding DRO's position on this legislation, please call Ben Gurewitz at 971-806-7908 or email him at bgurewitz@droregon.org.

¹ See ORS 192.517.

² See 42 U.S.C. § 15041 et seq; 42 U.S.C. § 10801 et seq.

³ See 42 U.S. Code § 15043(a)(2)(L).