

Submitter: Melanie St John
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB794
February 4, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

Re: SB 794 Expansion of OPG authority to provide more types of services

I am writing in strong support of SB 784 – Expansion of the Oregon Public Guardian’s authority to provide more types of services. I have volunteered for more than 40 years in Oregon working to help vulnerable people in Oregon. This has ranged from hospice respite work, Habitat for Humanity, Trauma Intervention Program, certified ombudsman for long-term care and most recently, and likely the most impactful, as a volunteer Legal Guardian with the Oregon Public Guardian’s office. I have also cared for family members who needed additional help as they aged and their cognitive abilities were severely affected.

As a volunteer Legal Guardian, I see first-hand the issues that face vulnerable adults when they need help with decision-making. From hospital discharge, housing placement, services needed to maintain health and safety and financial decisions, more and more people without family members who are either willing to, or can, help make decisions are struggling to get their basic needs met. Guardianship is not always the answer, as many individuals are capable of making their own decisions, but need some additional help and support to insure their safety and care needs are met.

In today’s society when many of our most vulnerable citizens are without strong supports, the services that OPG could render would help so many more Oregonians than they currently do and at a much lower cost than guardianship. Many long-term care facilities are hesitant to admit residents without a strong support system in place, so having OPG provide POA or Healthcare Representative services would help both the facility and the adult know that support is available should a situation would arise where additional resources were needed. Hospitals and health care providers would benefit from knowing that support was in place when significant decisions needed to be made about an individual’s care.

I urge you to support SB 794 expanding OPG’s authority to provide additional authority to vulnerable Oregonians.

Melanie St John

1923 SE Pine St
Portland, OR 97214
stjohnmelanie@gmail.com