

Submitter: Claudia Coke
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB794

As a professional guardian, a former Deputy Public Guardian, and former Interim Executive Director for Central Oregon Guardian Assistance Program, I have seen firsthand the need for alternatives to having a court appointed guardian. Many people who have either temporary impaired mental health or medical decision making capacity would benefit from an advocate who could step in and make decisions with and for the person until they regained full capacity. Sometimes, a qualified professional such as someone from Oregon Public Guardian Conservator can make the difference between someone who can function independently and someone who cannot. An example is a person who has mild dementia and can no longer make sense of their bills and finances. Oregon Public Guardian Conservator could step in, without a court process, and fully trained and ethically bound to assist the person with bill paying and other financial needs. A person who needs a medical procedure and needs a health care advocate would also benefit from this new authority, if it was granted to Oregon Public Guardian Conservator.

I have seen many times when a person does not meet the criteria to be deemed incapacitated but needs significant help in order to remain safe and be able to function adequately in their lives. I strongly endorse the passing of SB794 to help those who need a health care representative, a person to name on an advanced directive, as an attorney-in-fact voluntarily appointed by the person in a declaration for mental health treatment, as a health care advocate appointed by a person's ISP team, as a supporter voluntarily appointed by a person in a supported decision making agreement, as a power of attorney for finances voluntarily appointed by a person and as a representative payee appointed by any income source.

Please pass SB794.

Claudia Coke