



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Residential Facilities Ombudsman Program

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Feb. 11, 2025

To: Senate Human Services Committee

From: Leslie Sutton, Residential Facilities Ombudsman

RE: Support for SB 794, allowing the Oregon Public Guardian to use less restrictive decision-making support tools to help people with disabilities who do not have friends or families willing or able to do so

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee:

The Residential Facilities Ombudsman uses advocacy to create change in people's lives and system policy so that people with disabilities can live full lives in Oregon's communities. We support people who live in Adult Mental Health Residential or Foster Homes, Adult Developmental Disability Group or Foster Homes, and Child Developmental Disability Foster, Host and Group Homes.

Everyone needs support sometimes to make decisions. These supports range from powers of attorney to guardianship or conservatorship. Over the spectrum of these supports, guardianship is the most restrictive. It removes people's rights to make certain decisions, is costly and time consuming and should be used as a true last resort.

We work with people who need decision-making supports that do not rise to the level of guardianship, like a power of attorney or health care representative. SB 794 would allow the Oregon Public Guardian to be in this role for people who do not have friends or family members able or willing to serve. We support this change because it will allow people to access decision-making supports that are less restrictive to guardianship. This change which goes with the spirit and intent of Oregon's guardianship laws which are to support independence and seek less-restrictive alternatives to guardianship when possible.

Thank you,

Leslie Sutton
Residential Facilities Ombudsman