



February 11, 2025

Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin
Committee on Human Services
Oregon Senate

Senator Gelsler Blouin and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Oregon Office on Disability and Health and the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, at Oregon Health & Science University. We strongly support Senate Bill 729, which stipulates that no public body may deny any individual access to mental health assessment, treatment or services on the basis that the individual also has an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD), regardless of age of the individual.

People with I/DD, like all people, can experience mental health challenges and need access to care when mental health challenges arise. For example, data indicates that people with developmental disabilities and social or communication disabilities may be up to four times more likely to face depression than people without developmental disabilities. People with I/DD can also benefit from mental health treatment. Research shows that people with I/DD can benefit from many of the same evidence-based therapy approaches used for people without I/DD.

Denying individuals mental health care on the basis of disability is unjust. Unfortunately, such denials are common, resulting in widespread lack of access to appropriate mental health care for people with I/DD.

This Bill seeks to prevent discrimination in receipt of mental health care on the basis of disability. It represents an important step forward in ensuring that all people in Oregon receive necessary care. Thank you for your support of SB 729.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Willi Horner-Johnson".

Willi Horner-Johnson, PhD
Professor, OHSU-PSU School of Public Health
Director, Oregon Office on Disability and Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda M Eppelsh".

Rhonda Eppelsheimer, MSW LCSW
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