



February 12, 2025

To: Senator Gelser Blouin, Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: Senate Bill 729 (Support)

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

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 30 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equity, and community integration for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. Our members include the Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition (a statewide coalition of people with I/DD or “self-advocates”), peer-based family support organizations, support services brokerages, advocacy organizations, and developmental disability providers and the DD Act Network Partners.

People thrive when they have the support they need to succeed. The Oregon legislature upheld that value in 2024 with the passage of Senate Bill 1557. That legislation improved access to those supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by prohibiting the Oregon Health Authority, a community health program, a licensed medical provider, an education provider, or a coordinated care organization from denying mental health services based on the fact that the individual also has an intellectual or developmental disability.

In two respects, however, that piece of legislation fell short of fulfilling the principle that no individual should be denied access to care based on their specific disability type. It applied the prohibition on denial of care only to individuals under the age of 21 years and limited the applicability of that prohibition with respect to government entities only to the Oregon Health Authority. The DD Coalition lends its support to SB 729, because it effectively remedies those issues.



A recent study commissioned by the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities in collaboration with the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed found, “Stigma and discrimination against individuals with I/DD and mental health conditions can create barriers to accessing quality crisis management services and may contribute to inadequate support and treatment.”¹ It also identified the need to address discrimination in order to enhance support for Oregonians with I/DD and co-occurring mental health conditions.²

SB 729 will expand the anti-discrimination protections of SB 1557 (2024) to all individuals with I/DD regardless of age by prohibiting any public entity from engaging in discriminatory actions. Extending those protections to all individuals with I/DD fulfills a promise that no one should be excluded from critical mental health services based on their disability. Expanding the prohibition against discrimination to include all public entities, such as state and local governments, will provide more comprehensive safeguards that people with I/DD may seek mental health services without fear of discrimination.

¹ National Association for the Dually Diagnosed. “Analyzing Experiences and Systems of Care: Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Individuals with I/DD in Oregon,” page 21 (December 2024). Available at <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/127696>

² *Id.* at 39.