

March 1, 2025

Chair Gelser-Blouin, Vice Chair Linthicum Members of the Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97310

RE: Support for Senate Bill 228—The Family Council Bill

On behalf of District 9 in *The Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman*, we want to thank you for your continued support of Oregon's seniors and disabled persons residing in rural and frontier counties. We are committed to supporting and promoting critical advocacy measures that ensure seniors and people with disabilities have access to quality care throughout Eastern Oregon.

This shared dedication is why we are encouraging you to support *The Family Council Bill*. By supporting this legislation you initiate an essential role in preventing problems and guiding members towards constructive resolutions. Family councils can also help rural families that experience location disparities, by assisting them to stay informed, while working towards shared goals.

For instance, family councils help identify problems and then decide on a collaborative solution to strengthen services and improve care. This is even more important for Oregon's remote communities looking for strategies to assist loved ones living miles away from home.

Family councils also enhance communications between families and facility staff; helping to reduce the barriers to poorer health outcomes that exist in underserved areas.

Another benefit of family councils is the supportive role they play in making sure residents and families feel less isolated. Providing a cushion to new residents and family members unfamiliar with the complex long-term care system.

But more importantly, family councils help members to stay connected. Families are able to come together to provide support, express concerns, gather ideas, and construct workable strategies. And in doing so, life takes a turn for the better.

We believe the Family Council Bill would lead to quality of care for the 1,600 individuals residing in long-term care facilities in Eastern Oregon, as well as the friends and family members that are a source of emotional support, practical help, and social connection.

Thank you for all that you do to support seniors and those with disabilities residing in long-term care facilities. Every resident should have access to a safe and home-like environment. The Family Council Bill promotes and embraces this basic right.

Sincerely,  
Kathy Thomas, MPH, CHES  
Deputy Ombudsman for District 9  
The Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
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