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On Behalf Of: Or St Cn for Retired Citizens United Srs of OR
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3497

Testimony, HB 3497, State Plan on Aging, Shared Future Oregon
House Human Services Committee, March 2025
(Submitted On OLIS)

I'm Dr. Jim Davis, a retired gerontologist/psychologist and gerontology professor, representing the Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens, United Seniors of Oregon, state affiliates of the National Council on Aging, in support of HB 3497, joining a long list of organizations and individuals supporting the development of a comprehensive state plan on the impact of the tremendous growth in the elder population and the formation of a representative Task Force to provide needed input.

With us baby boomers (1946-1964) crashing into their elder years and doubling the elder population, they are redefining the older adult landscape and creating a transformation of how society responds to aging. HB 3497 will allow for the development of a State Plan looking at the programmatic and policy aspects of the aging of Oregon's population and create a statewide planning and advisory process that will include consumers, providers, agency leadership, and other interested parties with the goal to help our state to adequately prepare for the explosion of our senior population with the arrival of the baby boomers. It is important to redefine the scope of community-based services and long term care that will be needed in the future, including the trained workforce that will be necessary to meet the needs of this older population growth and the related issues around services, support systems, staffing, training, licensing, regulation, and many other critical areas.

Since the 1980s, Oregon has built a senior service system that is a national model for in-home and community-based care, providing the most independent living environment for seniors and persons with disabilities through "continuum of care" options, including home health care, personal care, homemaker services, outreach, home and congregate meals, transportation, information and referral, counseling, legal assistance, and other options for how they can meet their lifestyle preferences and health care needs. Community-based care has been a cost-effective investment that helps respond to the physical and emotional problems of the elderly and the disabled, allowing them to remain in their own communities and live independent lives. It has saved the state hundreds of millions of dollars in health care costs related to hospitalization and institutionalization.

We do want to recommend that this process place appropriate emphasis on

preventive mental health and addiction services that are critically needed for older adults. Seniors are at high risk of developing behavioral health difficulties such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, obsessive concerns about health, and mild paranoia, often exacerbated by the effects of complex medical problems, multiple medications and the use and abuse of alcohol and prescription medications.

The public and private mental health systems have traditionally not adequately responded to the behavioral health needs of seniors, with even greater hurdles experienced by older ethnic and cultural populations. For example, it is traditionally very difficult if not impossible for an APD/DHS Medicaid client, whether in-home or in community-based facilities, to access community-based Medicaid mental health and addiction services, or for that matter an OHA/OHP client to access APD/DHS long term care services. Task Force recommendations should touch on the implementation of systematic, programmatic and policy changes to create a more seamless path for seniors to access mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services from OHA and long term services and supports from ODHS simultaneously without interruption of services and supports from either agency or system.

HB 3497 creates a needed process for planning of the future of our rapidly expanding older population. Please support this important legislation.