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March 19, 2025

Matt Serres, Policy Director  
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
2475 SE Ladd Ave #231  
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Testimony on House SB 977 (Neutral)

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To Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. Everyone deserves the chance to learn in integrated school settings that provide similar educational opportunities. Ensuring equal access to education for people with disabilities means actively working to expand post-secondary opportunities.

There are large educational gaps as it pertains to post-secondary education for people with or without disabilities in the United States. For people with disabilities aged 25 and over in Oregon, only 14.8% have attained a 4-year college degree, whereas for those without disabilities that percentage is 25.3%.<sup>1</sup> Those differences in education lead to differentials in earnings and more challenges in securing employment later in life. The employment gap is even more dramatic with only 47.7% of Oregonians with disabilities employed as compared to 79.7% in the general population.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Research on Disability, 2025 Disability Compendium, Section 13, Table 13.8. Available at <https://www.researchondisability.org/annual-disability-statistics-collection/2025-compendium-table-contents/section-13-education-compendium-2025>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at Section 3, Table 3.1.



Despite those disparities in educational and employment, Oregon invests very little in post-secondary programs that are specifically tailored for people with I/DD. Inclusive Post-Secondary Programs (IPSE) like the one at Portland State University provide individualized support for youth with I/DD that encompass inclusive academic, employment and social engagement activities. While many IPSE programs are like the one at PSU are designed to be non-degree focused, they do provide students with career and transitional training. That may include things such as certificate programs, work-based training, skills-based short courses, or online micro-credentialing.

Compared with other states in the U.S., Oregon is trailing significantly in the number of IPSE programs it offers. The Career and Community Studies program at Portland State University is the only IPSE program across the entire state. States like North Carolina and Florida have 25 such programs. Western states of comparable size to Oregon also have more programs such as Washington that has three such programs or Colorado that has five of them.<sup>3</sup> Oregon could be doing more to offer youth with I/DD the change to engage in higher education, gain work experience, and develop independent living skills.

SB 977 would have a positive impact on those with I/DD by expanding post-secondary educational opportunities for them throughout the state.

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<sup>3</sup> Think College. "College Search." Available at <https://thinkcollege.net/college-search>