



1 April 2025

Senate Committee on Health Care
Oregon Legislature

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

RE: Senate Bill 1188

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I serve as the Executive Director of the **Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA)** in Salem. We serve low-income residents across Marion, Polk, and nine additional counties in Oregon. Each year, we provide more than \$80 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians experiencing poverty. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council, was a member of the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, and most recently Chaired the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge.

In all of these roles, I have witnessed firsthand the significant barriers individuals face when they are medically ready to be discharged from hospitals but cannot leave due to a lack of legal supports necessary to make decisions about their care. This creates a devastating bottleneck, not just for the individuals and families involved, but for hospitals, social service systems and service providers like MWVCAA who are trying to transition people into safe, stable environments.

Senate Bill 1188 would establish critical grant programs under the Oregon Public Guardian and Conservator to assist individuals with complex health care needs facing hospital discharge. Through the establishment of a Community Guardianship Grant Program which would allow nonprofit and county-based programs to expand their capacity and serve individuals with no one else to advocate for them and by creating a Friends and Family Guardianship Grant Fund to support those willing to serve as guardians but are unable to afford the costs to initiate protective proceedings. These programs would be administered through the Office of Long Term Care Ombudsman, with clear requirements for national ethical standards and certification for those providing decision-making support, ensuring safety and accountability for all involved.

This legislation will have a direct and positive impact on the populations MWVCAA serves every day, particularly low-income elders, adults with disabilities and individuals experiencing housing instability. Beyond relieving system strain, it offers those individuals dignity, autonomy, and a clear path forward.

For all of these reasons, I urge your strong support for Senate Bill 1188 so that we can bring meaningful chain to individuals caught in limbo between healthcare and legal systems. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director