



April 2, 2025

House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 2956

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Sharf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2956. I'm Mark Meek, State Senator for District 20 (Oregon City, Gladstone, Happy Valley).

HB 2956 creates a four-year pilot program that takes a necessary step toward ensuring Oregon's growing aging population receives attentive, high-quality care, while also creating a sustainable solution for our care providers who dedicate their lives to serving vulnerable seniors.

Oregon's adult foster homes provide housing and vital, round-the-clock care to older adults and people with physical disabilities in small, home-like environments. However, stagnant reimbursement rates, rising operational costs, and limited capacity have forced many adult foster homes to close. Despite our growing elderly population, we are losing the homes that care for them, leaving many lifelong Oregon residents with no choice but to seek care in larger facilities or out of state altogether.

This four-year pilot program explores expanding certain foster homes to care for up to six or seven residents - instead of their current limit of five residents. States such as Washington and Colorado have already implemented similar policy changes have found significant success, even without an initial pilot program. It has increased access to care while continuing to ensure resident safety and well-being. Oregon would be wise to follow their lead.

Again, this is just a limited pilot program, but there are some important protections in place that I want to highlight in the -2:

- Adult foster homes are required to preserve their existing 1:5 staffing ratio—an additional safeguard not required in other states. In fact, with six or seven residents, homes would require two staff members, **increasing** the level of care and individualized attention. This ensures that resident well-being, safety, and quality of care remain top priorities.
- Homes in the pilot program will not require residents to share occupancy unless it is with a spouse or intimate partner, and participation in shared occupancy must be voluntary and



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have written consent. This guarantees that no resident is forced to share a room or have their personal space compromised.

- Before joining the pilot program, adult foster homes must pass a physical inspection conducted by the department to verify that the home and its operations can safely accommodate one or two additional residents, while also maintaining current square footage requirements.
- The department will collect and analyze data on the pilot program's success, including the frequency of monitoring by local regulatory authorities, to ensure resident well-being and safety.

Additionally, we are responding to feedback received and will have a forthcoming amendment that makes the following, further changes to the pilot:

- This four-year pilot program would apply to a maximum of 30 APD adult foster homes—approximately 2% of Oregon's total adult foster home population.
- Before being approved for the program, DHS will verify that an adult foster home is in "substantial compliance," a term defined in state law, meaning the home not only has a history of compliance to rules and regulations, but they are currently compliant as well. This ensures that only well-qualified homes—already meeting essential safety, staffing, and care standards—are permitted to expand their capacity.
- Prior to participating in the pilot program, an adult foster home must demonstrate to the department's satisfaction that it can safely accommodate additional residents and staff while maintaining fire and life safety standards for evacuation.
- To ensure the program's full implementation, the pilot's sunset date will be extended from 2029 to 2030, maintaining the required four-year duration.
- Additionally, when the pilot program concludes, residents will not face eviction due to its expiration. Those residing in a participating home will be allowed to remain, and adult foster homes will not be penalized for housing an additional one or two residents until those residents leave voluntarily. At that point, the home will return to the standard five-resident maximum.

This pilot program is very similar to the one that was proposed in HB 3270 A in 2019, which passed the House of Representatives unanimously that year. In fact, since that time, the need for piloting this concept has only grown. That growing need, combined with the thoughtful changes we have made in response to stakeholder feedback, make this a strong pilot program.

Mark Meek
State Senator
District 20



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If we fail to act, Oregon will continue to see a decline in adult foster homes while demand for long-term care only increases. HB 2956 offers a thoughtful, measured solution to this growing crisis by exploring ways to help adult foster homes remain financially viable while continuing to provide safe, high-quality care in a home-like setting. I urge your support for this important legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mark Meek
State Senator – District 20