



Advancing Opportunities

March 21, 2020

To: Co-Chair Roblan and Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response

From: Katie Rose, Chair, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

Re: Coronavirus Relief must support people experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families

Thank you for your continued work on behalf of Oregonians in this challenging time of Coronavirus crisis. The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 36 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equality and community integration for Oregonians experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. Our members include a coalition of people experiencing IDD, peer-based family support organizations, support services brokerages, advocacy organizations and service providers.

The DD Coalition believes that we are all better off when we are all healthy – including people experiencing disabilities. Current CDC guidelines indicate that people with underlying conditions such as heart or lung conditions or diabetes are at particular risk for COVID-19 complications. People experiencing developmental disabilities often have co-occurring conditions that put them at greater risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19.¹

We respectfully submit five suggestions to your proposed “Temporary Relief for The Duration of Emergency Declaration Immediate Actions to be Taken by the Legislature by March 31st”.

1. Extend bed holds to 60 days to accommodate if someone leaves a residential setting temporarily during this emergency time. This could accommodate people who want to spend the next few weeks with family or if they are hospitalized for whatever reason.

¹ People experiencing Autism are at greater risk of health complications including immune, metabolic and heart conditions. Croen L.A. *et al.* *Autism* Epub ahead of print (2015) **PubMed**, People with Cerebral Palsy are at risk for respiratory and cardiovascular diseases <https://www.cerebralpalsy.org/information/respiratory-health>, <https://cerebralpalsynewstoday.com/2018/10/01/cardiovascular-disease-is-more-prevalent-in-patients-with-cerebral-palsy/> 1 in 2 People with Down Syndrome are born with a heart defect <https://www.ndss.org/resources/the-heart-down-syndrome/>



2. Increased funding for more staffing to support people's changing needs during this time. This should be available for in-home, residential and foster settings. As stress increases and routines and staff patterns are disrupted, people are going to need additional supports to stay safe and healthy. Before this crisis, during the 2020 session, the Office of Developmental Disability Services had requests of over \$30 million dollars to shore up current service levels. These requests were not funded and did not consider additional services to accommodate new and different needs during an emergency.

3. Ensure that Personal Support Workers and Direct Support Professionals are considered “essential workers” in the case of a shelter-in-place or similar order. This is a workforce that can't “work from home”. DSPs and PSWs will be caring for those who may become ill and may even be quarantined with the person experiencing IDD to provide support.

4. Classify Personal Support Workers and Direct Support Professionals as “health care workers” or “emergency workers” so they can access personal protective equipment and benefits from the emergency worker package that may include child care resources. These professionals support people experiencing IDD with medical needs, behavior support, personal hygiene, support to maintain employment and make real connections in the community. This is hands-on work that cannot be done from a social distance.

5. New Federal Programs: Paid Expanded FMLA & Emergency Paid Sick Leave

- **Small Business Immediate Loans for Expanded FMLA and Emergency Paid Sick Leave (PSL):** Emergency Funding made available to small businesses subject to the new FMLA and PSL requirements (for-profit and non-profit) under 500 employees through no-interest loans with Business Oregon. This will not only assist these employers, many who will be essential workforce with the need to stay open and on the job but will also protect against further burden on the Unemployment pool or complete closure of these entities.
- **Large Business – PFML:** If large businesses (for-profit and non-profit) choose to implement temporary emergency leave programs that are comparable to the Expanded FMLA program the State should offer similar state tax credit incentives and immediate loan options to cover the upfront cash demand.

Thank you for your dedication and consideration to ensure that Oregonians experiencing intellectual or developmental disabilities stay healthy and safe during this time of crisis.