

## SENATE BILL 626 TESTIMONY

Renames Long Term Care Ombudsman as Ombudsman for Vulnerable Adults

and

Renames Office of Long Term Care Ombudsman as Office of Ombudsman for Vulnerable Adults

Chair \_\_\_\_\_, members of the committee . . . Good Afternoon

My name is Marsha A. Mason, 20251 Hoodview Avenue, West Linn, OR 97068 and I represent myself, parent of a mentally ill adult.

I support Senate Bill 626. I believe that our mentally ill and developmentally disabled populations are vulnerable populations, just as vulnerable as persons in long term care situations, and as such, deserve to be included along with this population and have an ombudsman to call on when care or treatment is questioned. In these economically trying times that our country is experiencing, it is the vulnerable populations that many times lack a voice and are unable to advocate for themselves. Budgets are slashed and seemingly balanced on the backs of people without a voice, again those who are unable to advocate for themselves. It is imperative that we protect our vulnerable populations and expand protection and representation, rather than take it away or just leave well enough alone. I commend this committee for taking testimony on a bill that would do just that - expand care and protection beyond what it is today.

My daughter, Dana, is a mentally ill adult. She is presently 26 years old and was diagnosed as mentally ill at the age of 14. She has been in and out of institutions since she was 14. She is currently living independently, although not very successfully. I believe that if she, or I, had access to an ombudsman at various times in her past, she may have had a different outcome. Just based on her past, I can foresee a time in the future where she will have the need to call on an ombudsman. I hope that there will be an office and a person who will be able to help her.

Because vulnerable populations many times can not advocate nor speak up for themselves, it is up to us to find the ways and means to do this for them. Societies are judged on whether they take care of and protect the most vulnerable among them. It is my hope that Senate Bill 626 becomes law and my daughter, Dana, along with the many, many other vulnerable adults in the State of Oregon, have an ombudsman they can turn to when they have the need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.