



Date: February 3, 2014
To: The House Health Care Committee
From: The Intellectual and Developmental Disability Coalition
RE: Support for HB 4108 Durable Medical Equipment Repurposing Pilot Projects

Dear Chair Greenlick, Vice-Chair Keny-Guyer, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joanne Fuhrman. Today, I represent the Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition (IDD Coalition), which is a group of approximately 30 organizations throughout Oregon that promote quality services and supports to further equality and community integration for Oregonians with developmental disabilities and their families.

I am also the Associate Director for Partnerships in Community Living, Inc. which is a not-for-profit organization that expands the horizons and enhances the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. We support 210 adults with developmental disabilities to achieve their goals while living and working in their communities.

The IDD Coalition envisions an Oregon where all people are valued and granted equal opportunity to be treated alike while moving beyond barriers and prejudices. The IDD Coalition supports HB 4108 because we believe the bill will break down a very real barrier for people with disabilities: timely access to appropriate durable medical equipment. Without this equipment, many people cannot safely navigate in their homes, workplaces, or community.

Many Oregonians cannot put their lives on hold as they wait for new equipment to arrive or for old equipment to be repaired, which could take weeks after the order. Instead, they access used equipment through informal "equipment closets" or online sources like Craig's List or Facebook. Generally, the informal sources do not provide fitting or repair services. This means people receive used equipment that could put them at risk for injury because the equipment may not fit properly or may need repairs. Many people take that risk, however, because having something is better than nothing.

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Partnerships in Community Living, Inc., like many other providers, operates an “equipment closet” for the people we support. This equipment is also often accessed by our employees, their families, and members of our community. In our program, when someone we support stops having a need for basic equipment, we hold on to it because we know another person we support or a member of our community will likely need it later. We also accept donations of durable medical equipment from the community.

Our equipment closet inventory is very limited because it only contains equipment those we support no longer uses. For many people in need, our closet does not have the right equipment to meet their needs. In those cases, people have had to make do with what they can find online or through friends and family and they do not benefit from personalized fitting services.

I like the following stories because they demonstrate that having another, safe market to get this equipment would really help people. If a project like the one proposed in HB 4108 existed, these people's lives would be better because they would not have to risk injury or be confined to their homes for weeks or months at a time while they wait for new equipment (when used equipment could work) or repairs.

PCL supports a gentleman that depends on a wheelchair that is 15 years old. His wheelchair is being held together with duct-tape in some places. The chair gets stuck in a forward position, which makes it unusable. This man has been waiting on a new wheel chair for several months. We have had repairs done to his current wheelchair to hold him over, but they do not hold up and leave him using a very slow and sometime unsafe wheel chair. If he could be assessed for a new chair as proposed in HB 4108, he would have a safe alternative while he is waiting on the approval for a new chair. Even better, he may find a chair that would meet his needs and not need to purchase a new chair. This is a win for the person supported and is a cost savings for our system. The perfect win-win for all involved.

The program proposed in HB 4108 would allow people access to a much broader range of equipment than we can provide in our equipment closet – and it would include fitting services. People no longer have to rely on used equipment that “is not quite right” simply because it is the only available option that would allow them to navigate their homes, workplaces, and communities.

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Oregon can do better for people with disabilities who use durable medical equipment and the IDD Coalition believes that HB 4108 bill is a step in the right direction. This bill is a win-win because it allows people who are done using equipment to get rid of it while allowing the same equipment to be repaired and refitted for the next user.

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