



NANCY DOTY, INC.

Care Coordination & Consultation to Individuals & Families

February 4, 2014

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services
Oregon State Capital
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Madam Chair and Esteemed Committee Members:

I have had an opportunity to review the most recent version of SB 1553, slated for a public hearing today. Unfortunately, due to my work demands and the short notice, I will not be able to be present. However, I am very concerned and would like to express to the Committee my hope that there will be an opportunity for further discussion on matters within this Bill.

Most concerning is the proposal to place the new Oregon Public Guardian Office under the auspices of the current Long Term Care Ombudsman program. Traditionally, these entities represent two distinct philosophies within the realm of care for our most vulnerable citizens.

The Ombudsman's office has represented it's mandate to advocate for the individual—DESPITE the appointment of a guardian. A guardian's role has been to advocate for substituted judgment/best interest that would keep the protected person as safe and healthy as possible, sometimes in spite of their own stated wants/needs. The point is that there are persons in need of protection who have guardians for very specific reasons and who will not be ultimately helped by the demonstrated position of the Ombudsman.

In other words, there are two philosophies at work, sometimes in tandem, at other times at odds. And to put both programs under one roof is to put in motion the certainty that a very real conflict of interest will be nearly impossible to negotiate if both agencies are promoting the very best of their professional roles, especially under one administrator.

I understand that this proposed melding of the two is primarily financially driven. But I would ask: at what ultimate cost to the protected persons?

This is only the first of many concerns, albeit the most easily described in a short time and in a way that will allow further contemplation of this very important Bill.

Please do not rush to this proposed combination of the office of the Long Term Ombudsman (with a federally mandated outline of services) and the new Oregon Public Guardian that will be obligated to follow State Revised Statutes. There MUST be further examination of the basis for this merger.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I ask only that this Senate Bill 1553 be vetted in a more thoughtful way with better opportunity for public response.

Respectfully submitted,

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