

SENIOR & DISABLED SERVICES
A DIVISION OF LANE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



February 3, 2014

To: Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services

Re: Senate Bill 1553 Creation of the Public Guardian and Conservator Office.

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care and Human Services

Lane County Senior & Disabled Services urges your support of SB 1553, because the creation of a State Office of Public Guardian and Conservator would serve to protect some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens from abuse and neglect. While Senior & Disabled Services strives to promote dignity, independence and choice by protecting the rights of adults through self-determination and seeking least restrictive options, there are times when people need assistance in making serious decisions regarding housing, medical care, and finances. When the risk of serious harm to a vulnerable adult exists and there are no available or appropriate family members, friends or acquaintances to step up, a public guardian can fill the role as substitute decision maker for those important and sometimes lifesaving, decisions.

In 2012-2013 the Lane County Adult Protective Services Unit received 2,558 referrals alleging abuse and neglect of an older adult over the age of 65 or a physically disabled adult over the age of 18. People over the age of 85 are the fastest growing segment of the population; this is also the segment most vulnerable to abuse and neglect due to mental incapacity from the progression of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease or a traumatic brain injury. Many are without family or friends to serve as a guardian; and they are without finances to cover the cost of guardianship. These at risk adults are in need of assistance to act on their behalf for medical care, housing and financial management. The proposed State Office of Public Guardian and Conservator will provide critically needed assistance and protection to the states most at risk vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for this opportunity to re-iterate our support of SB 1553. We urge your support of this very important, and much needed measure.

Sincerely,

Becky Strickland, Manager of Adult Protective Services

Lane County Senior & Disabled Services

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

SENIOR & DISABLED SERVICES • (541) 682-4498
1015 WILLAMETTE ST., EUGENE, OR 97401-3113 • FAX: (541) 682-7485

www.sdslane.org
1-800-441-4038 • TTY (541) 682-4567