



## **Senator Michael Dembrow**

Senate District 23 (NE and SE Portland, Maywood Park)

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S-407

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# **Bill Brief: SB 1553**

## **Oregon Public Guardian and Conservator**

### **Background:**

Due to the lack of public guardian services across Oregon, adults lacking in capacity to make personal, medical and financial decisions have nowhere to turn. Lack of secure guardianship may result in repeat hospitalizations, commitment to psychiatric units, or even premature death. Without a trusted friend or family member to act as fiduciary those facing severe mental health conditions, developmental disabilities, and age related conditions who cannot afford to hire a fiduciary go without this crucial protection. Currently only Multnomah County provides a public guardian option. As a result many Oregonians in need of a guardian are unable to access one.

### **What SB 1543 Does:**

Senate Bill 1543 establishes a public guardianship program under the existing office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO). The program will be directed by the Oregon Public Guardian and Conservator (PGC), who will be appointed by the LTCO in consultation with their advisory committee. The PGC will hire two deputy public guardians to assist in carrying out the duties of the office.

The Public Guardian program will tasked with:

- Providing guardian and conservator services for persons who lack the financial resources to hire a private guardian, and do not have relatives or friends able to assume the role.
- Developing professional standards for eligibility and conduct of public guardians, as well as training and educational materials.
- Recruiting, training and supervising volunteers to assist in the duties of the office.
- Working with existing local, county and nonprofit organizations and with county public guardian offices, where they exist, to expand access to public guardian services statewide.
- Educating the public on the services provided by the office.

**SB 1543 has broad support from the advocacy community, including AARP, the Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities, and Disability Rights Oregon.**

*For more information, contact Senator Dembrow's office at 6-1723.*