

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE VULNERABLE ADULT MISSING PERSONS OR “SILVER ALERT” LEGISLATION

We, the undersigned organizations, individuals, and businesses, support the proposal in 2014 SB 1577 to address vulnerable adult missing persons. Commonly referred to as the “Silver Alert” bill, this proposal will improve the likelihood that people with Alzheimer’s disease who wander, as well as other vulnerable adults who go missing, will be found safely.

The number of people in Oregon with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias is growing. Today, about 80,000 Oregonians have Alzheimer’s disease, and that number is expected to climb to 110,000 by 2025. Alzheimer’s is a devastating disease that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills. Eventually, it destroys a person’s ability to carry out even the simplest tasks of daily living. There is no known cure, way to prevent, or even slow the progression of Alzheimer’s.

Sixty percent of people with Alzheimer’s will wander from their home. If not found within 24 hours, 60 percent will suffer a major injury or die. Eighty percent will die if not found within 72 hours. People with Alzheimer’s may not remember their name or address, and they can become disoriented, even in familiar places.

Wandering is also a serious concern for Oregonians living with developmental and other disabilities. In these cases, individuals are often seriously injured or killed when they walk into oncoming traffic. Additionally, these individuals might accidentally drown when they walk into a nearby water source. When vulnerable adults wander, time is of the essence to find them before they encounter these kinds of dangerous situations.

Law enforcement is frequently called on to respond to wandering cases. Many police and sheriff’s departments are well trained on what to do when they receive a report of a missing vulnerable adult. Not all have formal policies or training, however. That is what this bill addresses.

SB 1577 (Sections 1, 2, and 3) will require all police and sheriff’s departments in Oregon to adopt a formal policy on how to respond to a case of a missing vulnerable adult. This policy should include:

- 1) Procedures for conducting a search of a missing vulnerable adult
- 2) Description of the training officers will receive
- 3) Requirements for accepting missing persons reports
- 4) Protocols on involving the local media to have the public assist with a search
- 5) Protocols for coordinating with other agencies

If a department already has a formal policy that addresses the bill’s requirements, this does not affect it. The proposal also allows for flexibility and discretion for each department to determine the best way for it to address these matters.

As the number of residents with Alzheimer’s rises, Oregon will be seeing more wandering cases. This proposal will ensure that when they are reported, the response from law-enforcement agencies will be efficient and effective.

AARP Oregon

Long Term Care Advisory Committee

Oregon Association of Broadcasters

LeadingAge Oregon

Oregon Health Care Association

Oregon Public Health Association

Oregon Law Center

Elders in Action Commission

Alzheimer’s Association Oregon Chapter

Advocacy Coalition of Seniors and People with Disabilities

Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition

Campaign for Oregon Seniors and People with Disabilities

Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman

Service Employees International Union Local 503

Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities (O4AD)

Disability Rights Oregon