

Hello, I am Alli Faucher, an Employment Specialist with Dirkse Counseling and Consulting, a provider of employment and vocational rehabilitation services for Oregonians with disabilities.

Two years ago, Dirkse CC began working on a pilot project with Oregon VR, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Program and several school districts. The goal of the pilot is to braid resources and establish service links so that youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities can begin to envision working and to obtain competitive integrated employment before exiting their high school transition programs. This program has been highly successful, but requires a solid base of funding.

Let me tell you about Bella, a student at the Centennial Transition Center in Portland. Bella has a developmental disability and anxiety. Both she and her parents never thought she would be able to get past her barriers and go to work. With the assistance of the pilot partners, Bella is now a full-time employee at Regal Cinemas. Bella loves her job and was recently promoted. When Bella graduates in June 2015, she will not be sitting at home. She will be working.

Bella's mom wanted to be here today, but could not due to scheduling issues. She asked that I share the following testimony. She says, "I am a parent of 20 yr old daughter who is developmentally delayed. I cannot thank Dirkse enough for all they have & continue to do to support my daughter in becoming an active and contributing citizen in our society. They have taken the time to get to know my child and encourage her every step of the way. My daughter has gained so much confidence in just the last 3-6 months. I love seeing my daughter so happy about earning her own money as well as making new friends."

I want to encourage the legislature to continue to provide funding for to VR, DD and ODE for these important services that help people with disabilities find stable meaningful employment before leaving high school.

Thank you.