

TO: Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Human Services and Early
Childhood Committee
FROM: Kathryn Weit
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RE: SB 617
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The Fairview Trust is not the only housing issue and housing resource for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon that needs attention.

From the mid 1980's through the final closure of Fairview in 2000, people with I/DD were moved out of the institution into 4-5 bed group homes scattered throughout Oregon but primarily located up and down the Willamette Valley.

Through Oregon Housing and Community Supports, Oregon issued mostly 30-year bonds to support the construction of these houses. A maintenance and reserve fund was established in the State Treasury, separate and distinct from the General Fund, to provide repair dollars to protect the value of the bond. The ownership and management of the homes was transferred to nonprofit housing agencies and some service providers.

Housing and Community Supports currently reports holding bonds for 191 homes. There are over 800 people living in these homes. These bonds are beginning to expire. Forty seven bonds will expire within the next 4 years. When the bond is paid off there will be no ability to provide funding for maintenance of these homes, which are aging and showing the effects of hard wear and deferred upkeep. Technically, upon bond maturity, the housing stock reverts to the housing or provider organizations. At that point, there is no requirement that the housing itself or the equity asset must continue to be used for people with developmental disabilities. In some instances, the housing may be entitled to State funded retro fitting for the general market. The maturation of these bonds is both a potential crisis and an opportunity for the I/DD community and Office of Developmental Disability Services to rethink and reconfigure housing to meet today's needs.

SB 617 offers an opportunity to develop a thoughtful approach to effective use of our housing assets consistent with our values and vision, an approach that protects our current generation while planning for the next. We need to look at national best practices and link with other housing organizations and developers. We need to listen to self-advocates and families to create a new generation of housing that facilitates greater independence, choice and self-determination. We need to look at worksite safety issues to protect people employed to support folks with I/DD. We need to look at how we effectively use available funding resources like the Community First Option (K Plan). Most importantly we need to work with the organizations currently holding the bonded properties and help them explore creative ways to use the equity in the houses to further housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

SB 617 will focus those conversations and result in a strategic plan to effectively utilize both knowledge and resources to assure that there are community housing options that meet both the needs of today and expand housing opportunity in the future.