



February 25, 2015

TO: Co-Chairs Sen. Chip Shields and Rep. Jennifer Williamson
Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Subcommittee On Public Safety
FR: Bob Joodeph, Executive Director
RE: SB 5542

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is Oregon's federally-funded Protection and Advocacy office that is mandated by state and federal law to monitor institutional settings where Oregonians with disabilities receive services.

DRO has had a seat on the OYA Advisory Committee for many years and has had the opportunity to monitor OYA's activities and progress over that time. DRO has an interest in OYA youth because so many of them have disabilities which have contributed to their institutionalization. OYA's most recent data show that 32% of their youth have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) due to his or her disability, 49% have a documented history of abuse or neglect, 6% have an IQ under 80, 36% have been diagnosed with a depressive disorder, and 9% have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

DRO fully supports OYA's full implementation of its four key priorities.

- The Youth Reformation System
- Positive Human Development
- Apprenticeship and training opportunities for youth (SB 240)
- The 10-Year Strategic Plan for Facilities.

These priorities reflect a forward-looking strategy to use data about youth effectively, make thoughtful culture change to promote and model positive relationships and social engagement, and bring OYA's aging facilities into alignment with best practices in modern juvenile justice.

We are particularly concerned about the inadequacies of some OYA facilities to offer adequate space for group and individual treatment sessions, privacy, normative school environments, natural light and recreation. When a youth comes into OYA custody, society is offered an opportunity to turn around a life and improve our communities. It is well worth the investment.