



February 24, 2015

To: Senate Human Services and Early Learning Committee

From: Leslie Sutton, Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition

Re: Support for SB 617 to Establish Task Force on Housing for Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition (IDD Coalition) is a group of approximately 30 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equality and community integration for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

The IDD Coalition envisions an Oregon where all people are valued and granted equal opportunity to be members of their community. Housing is a fundamental step to creating a life in your community. We support SB 617 for the following reasons:

1. More people with I/DD and their families want independent, community living options.
2. Federal and state policy changes prioritize supports for people with I/DD in more integrated and independent settings.
3. Yet, the current I/DD system and subsidized housing options do not meet this rising demand.
4. The taskforce established in SB 617 will create a critical strategic plan that will support community integration and self-determination, while moving I/DD housing opportunities into the 21st century.

Current trends indicate that without housing options, many people are forced to access out-of-home services at a greater cost when they prefer to live in their own homes. The demand for affordable, community housing for people with I/DD is very high and will continue to climb as Oregon implements the following:

1. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued regulations governing Home and Community Based settings to require that Oregon serve people in the most



integrated settings and maximize opportunities for people to access their communities. The rules allow people to choose where they receive services, including receiving services in non-disability settings, like an apartment. Current affordable, accessible housing options are not adequate to support people who choose to live independently.

2. The Community First Choice (K Plan) offers individualized supports for people at levels that meet the person's needs. This is unprecedented in Oregon and will result in a demand for people to take their supports out of group or foster homes and into more individualized housing arrangements. Providers and adults with developmental disabilities report that this is already happening and finding affordable housing to meet this need is a real barrier.
3. Adults and children now use IDD supports to create a real life in their communities. For many people, a real life in their community does not include living in a five bed group home. Instead, they want to live in their own apartment like their friends and neighbors. In a recent Oregon Consortium of Family Networks survey, three out of four families believe their child will live independently as an adult. Independent living cannot happen if Oregon does not account for housing needs.
4. Subsidized housing is often not readily available to meet the needs of people with I/DD. The wait lists can be many years long – or longer for accessible units. Some support service brokerage personal agents report customers waiting over eight years for Section 8. Even with a housing voucher, the competitive housing market makes it difficult to find an appropriate apartment.
 - a. Without subsidies or additional family supports, people cannot afford places of their own. For example, in the Portland metro area, according to the 2015 Washington State Housing Needs Assessment, the average rent for one bedroom is \$771. To afford this apartment, you would need to earn \$2,570 per month. Most people with I/DD live on SSI which only gives them \$733 per month, which is less than the actual rent due.
 - b. Without affordable, accessible housing, people with I/DD face homelessness or perpetual couch surfing. For many, the only alternative is to move into a group or foster home, not because they need support, but because it is the only way to get safe and affordable housing.



- c. When people have unstable housing, they have unstable lives. They are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and often do not engage health care employment services.

The IDD Coalition supports the task force because it recognizes that housing for people with IDD must include the Community Housing Trust Account, the current IDD housing stock, other community housing assistance and opportunities. SB 617 also recognizes that housing is fundamental to community integration and self-determination for people with I/DD.

Oregon has made a commitment to community housing opportunities for people with I/DD. Adults with I/DD, their families and providers report that the number one barrier to housing is availability. It is time to modernize that commitment by establishing a task force to move housing for people with I/DD into the 21st Century.

