

# Protecting Oregonians with Severe Disabilities

## General Assistance: The Next Step — HB 2194



**We believe in an Oregon that protects our most vulnerable residents with severely disabling conditions. All Oregonians deserve safety, stability and dignity.**

Since 2005, Oregonians with severe and permanent disabilities have been suffering without our state's protection. People often wait an average of 1 to 2 years for federal disability benefits to be approved. When savings are exhausted and family supports unavailable, Oregonians without disability benefits risk homelessness, experience health crises and our community suffers. We can solve this crisis with state funded, temporary support programs that are reimbursed when individual federal benefits are approved.

### What is General Assistance?

General Assistance is a temporary benefit provided by many states to assist persons with severe disabilities to apply for, and secure, federal disability benefits.

While awaiting the federal decision of eligibility, which can take years, states provide cash and/or services to help participants meet basic needs. The state is reimbursed when a participant becomes eligible for federal benefits.

The program also provides case management to help vulnerable individuals navigate a complex system.

**Background:** The 2014 Legislative Assembly authorized a study to understand the need and determine recommended next steps. Guided by the Department of Human Services, the General Assistance Steering Committee and multiple state agencies, Portland State University and the Regional Research Institute for Human Services convened this research and [this final report](#) for the 2015 Legislative Assembly.

**A Pilot Project Proposal:** Oregon advocates recommend a modest pilot serving approximately 200 adults with disabilities experiencing homelessness and currently in the Medicaid Presumptive caseload. A housing first model with matching case management supports and a minimal cash assistance grant for basic needs will produce the highest outcomes for state programs and individuals. The full scope of the pilot will be envisioned in an amendment to **HB 2194**.

**Let's restore protections for Oregonians with severe disabilities.**

**The General Assistance Coalition supports HB 2194 to fund a GA Pilot Project.**

AARP of Oregon—ASSIST Program —Central City Concern — Community Action Partnership of Oregon — Disability Rights Oregon — Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon —Elders In Action — Housing Alliance — Human Services Coalition of Oregon — Northwest Pilot Project — Oregon Associations of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities — Oregon Center for Christian Voices — Oregon Food Bank — Oregon Law Center — Oregon Opportunity Network —Oregon Women's Rights Coalition — Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon — Partnership for Safety and Savings — Street Roots

### Steering Committee Contact Information

John Mullin, Oregon Law Center | [jmullin@oregonlawcenter.org](mailto:jmullin@oregonlawcenter.org) | 503-867-6236

Phillip Kennedy-Wong, Oregon Food Bank | [pkennedy-wong@oregonfoodbank.org](mailto:pkennedy-wong@oregonfoodbank.org) | 971-645- 2601

Patti Whitney-Wise, Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon | [patti@oregonhunger.org](mailto:patti@oregonhunger.org) | 503-757-8027

