



March 2, 2015

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Jennifer Bickett, Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disability Coalition

RE: Support for SB 622

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Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

The IDD Coalition is a group of approximately 30 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services and supports to further equality and community integration for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. We support SB 622 because it makes personal support workers (PSWs) mandatory abuse reporters.

The field has been operating and training PSWs as if they were mandatory abuse reporters for years. We only recently learned that they were not required to do so. This bill aligns Oregon law with current practice and ensures abuse protections for Oregonians with I/DD.

Oregon has mandatory abuse reporter laws to protect vulnerable citizens. People who have close relationships with people with disabilities are in the best position to identify and report abuse. Currently, mandatory abuse reporters include people who work with people with disabilities including attorneys, doctors, dentists, Department of Human Services employees, social workers, and child care providers. PSWs are a natural addition to this list because they also work with people with disabilities.



PSWs are the front line direct support workers for thousands of Oregonians with I/DD often hearing or seeing things that others may not. They provide critical support for people with disabilities to be members of their communities. The very nature of this relationship puts them in a position to identify and report abuse.

Mandatory abuse reporting responsibilities have been and continue to be, part of initial PSW training and orientation. However, because they are not legislatively required to be mandatory reporters, there are no administrative rules to ensure this practice continues. Changing this law will strengthen the authority to make sure abuse is reported.

Many members of the I/DD community already operate as if PSWs are mandatory reporters because they work so closely with people with disabilities – like other mandatory abuse reporters. Fixing this omission in Oregon law, will increase the number of people required to report abuse and is an important step to providing abuse protections for Oregonians with I/DD and other vulnerable populations.