



April 28, 2015

TO: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Jill Sorenson, Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disability Coalition

RE: Support for SB 622

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Chair Barker 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.

People with I/DD are disproportionately targeted for all types of abuse, as compared to the general population. Physical, sexual, verbal, and financial abuse are still far too common, as is neglect. Individuals with I/DD are too often isolated due to issues of mobility, communication, and poverty. Because of this, we need every person who enters the life of a person with I/DD to be informed about abuse, and committed to reporting it.

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, attorneys, doctors, dentists, Department of Human Services employees, social workers, and child care providers are all mandatory abuse reporters. PSWs are a natural addition to this



list because they also work with people with disabilities, often in their home environments. 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.

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 act as such. 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. This bill aligns Oregon law with current practice and ensures abuse protections for Oregonians with I/DD.

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.