



May 21, 2015

TO: Co-Chair Smith, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward and Members of the Ways and Means General Government Committee

RE: Support for SB 777 B

The Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOMHP) supports SB 777 B, which implements the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act in Oregon. AOCMHP's membership includes 32 Community Developmental Disability Programs (CDDPs) across Oregon - often the first contacts in the community for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). CDDPs are operated by either local government through Community Mental Health Programs, or by non-profit entities that contact with local government or directly with the State. CDDP's help assure the protection and safety of over 22,000 Oregonians with (I/DD) in collaboration with providers and families.

The ABLE Act allows families and individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) the opportunity to set up a tax-exempt 529A savings account under Internal Revenue Code for disability-related expenses. Families who have children with disabilities will be able to supplement their federal disability benefits and plan for the future of their children by setting up a 529A account. Some families have been unable to access entitled services, such as the Community First Choice- K State Plan Families because they may have a small trust for their child. In other situations, they have to create complex and expensive special needs trusts. Families can save for or have access to education services not severed such as tuition and tutors, transportation including purchase of or modification of vehicles and health related costs. Families can invest in their sons' and daughters' futures as they would for any of their other children.

A critical benefit is that adults with I/DD will no longer risk loss of their supplemental Security Income and other benefits as the ABLE Act disregards the current \$2000 in savings. This allows individuals an incentive to save and provides support to become more self-sufficient and independent. Individuals could save for employment supports, housing expenses, transportation costs, assistive technology or a dream vacation. .

We urge you to pass SB 777 B and join the other 5 states that have passed legislation and the 32 states including Oregon with pending legislation and support the 22,000 Oregonians with disabilities and their families to achieve greater independence and have a "real life" in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 777 B.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jane Owens
Developmental Disability Specialist, AOCMHP