

*from the desk of
Senator Sara Gelser
SAG*

Floor Letter from Cheryl Coon

April 21, 2015

To the Oregon Senate

Re SB 710

Dear Senator Gelser and Members of the Oregon Senate,

I would like to share my enthusiastic support for SB 710, a bill that would assist Oregon's most vulnerable populations in obtaining federal benefits for which they qualify.

When an Oregonian applies for social security disability benefits, he/she initially provides Social Security with a full list of the health care providers who have provided treatment. Social Security is supposed to collect those medical records.

But, if the applicant does not win at first (and most don't), for appeals, he/she must obtain all medical records from that time on. Because it takes about two years to get to a hearing, currently in Oregon the applicant has to pay to acquire those two years of medical records to supply to Social Security. That can be very costly. Even with electronic records, applicants are charged a fee. Even under existing Oregon law that limits the cost of copies of medical records, medical records can cost the average person \$200-\$700. (See, ORS 192.563).

That's a serious burden. These are hardworking Oregonians who have fallen on difficult times because of their medical problems, and they cannot afford to pay hundreds of dollars to access their Social Security disability benefits. Yet they cannot win their disability cases without their medical records.

SB 710 would remove this financial barrier for disabled Oregonians.

Eighteen states already have laws similar to SB 710. Oregon lags behind Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia when it comes to helping people with disabilities obtain their own medical records so they can win their claims to disability benefits.

There is no financial burden on the State of Oregon that would be created by SB 710. In fact, helping disability applicants to obtain federal disability benefits will alleviate economic burdens for Oregon because individuals who receive Social Security disability benefits are less likely to require state assistance.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Coon
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