

from the desk of
Senator Sara Balse
SAAD



DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

TO: Members of the Oregon Senate
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director
RE: Oppose or Modify SB 671A

Senate Bill 671A will be on the Senate floor for your consideration on Wednesday.

DRO did not testify when the bill was heard because we mistakenly believed that it applied only to the grounds of Blue Mountain Recovery Center. We have learned, however, that the bill also affects property that was once Eastern Oregon Training Center (EOTC), a "state training center" as defined in ORS 427.345.

ORS 427.345 says that when DHS "sells any surplus real property owned by the department and used as a state training center, the sale price shall equal or exceed the fair market value of the property, and the proceeds shall be applied to the Developmental Disabilities Community Housing Trust Fund. EOTC falls within this statute.

SB 671A calls for the "transfer", not "sale" of parts of the EOTC property in order to stimulate economic development in Pendleton in recognition of its loss of jobs related to closed institutions. We are not sure that this characterization of the transaction is correct.

DRO does not dispute the importance of using these properties to improve the economic climate in Pendleton. However, State transfer of former EOTC property or the property's subsequent sale by the City of Pendleton, should result in funds to be deposited in the Developmental Disabilities Community Housing Trust Fund.

The Trust was established by law in 1999 to continuously appropriate money to the DHS to for it to acquire, purchase, receive, hold, exchange, operate, demolish, construct, lease, maintain, repair, replace, improve and equip community housing for the purpose of providing care to individuals with intellectual disabilities or other developmental disabilities.

In the intervening years, about half the Trust contents have been "borrowed" for other purposes but never restored and it appears that Trust resources have not been properly invested and used as directed by the legislature. These issues are being considered though other legislative initiatives.

DRO believes that SB 671A, as applied to former EOTC property, violates the spirit, and perhaps the letter, of our long-standing Trust law. It also violates the promises made to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to use former institutional properties to improve their access to housing.