



March 1, 2017

TO: Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director  
RE: Support for SB 501

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is Oregon's nonprofit *Protection and Advocacy* office that provides legal-based advocacy to Oregonians with disabilities. DRO has a role under state law to monitor guardianship proceedings for individuals with mental health or developmental disabilities who may be placed in restrictive settings. As a result of this work, DRO has reviewed hundreds of guardianship proceedings.

SB 501 would direct the appointment of legal counsel in a protective proceeding when requested by a respondent, when a dispute arises as the result of a filed objection or when the judge or court visitor believes representation is needed.

A person for whom a guardianship is sought is likely to be highly vulnerable and not fully capable of defending their own interests in a legal proceeding. The appointment of a fiduciary can strip an adult of the authority to decide where to live, what medical care to receive, how to use and invest finances and many other aspects of life.

DRO supports SB 501 as a narrowly-drawn measure to assure that a person who is facing the loss of basic civil liberties has access to a representative who is trained to understand the process and communicate the person's interest and perspective to the court.