

# Protecting Oregonians with Severe Disabilities

## **HB 2959: Keeps the General Assistance Program in the State budget**



**VOTE YES: All Oregonians deserve safety, stability and dignity.**

*Since 2005, Oregonians with severe and permanent disabilities have been suffering without our state's protection. People often wait an average of 1 to 2 years for federal disability benefits to be approved. When savings are exhausted and family supports unavailable, Oregonians without disability benefits risk homelessness, experience health crises, and our community suffers. We are solving this crisis for a limited number of people with a state funded, temporary support program as funded in 2016 through the passage of HB 4042.*

### **What is General Assistance?**

General Assistance is a temporary benefit provided by many states to assist persons with severe disabilities to apply for, and secure, federal disability benefits.

While awaiting the federal approval, which can take years, states provide cash and/or services to help participants meet basic needs. The state is reimbursed when a participant becomes eligible for federal benefits.

The program also provides case management to help vulnerable individuals access care and services.

### **What is HB 2959?**

**HB 2959 keeps the General Assistance Program funded for 2017-19 budget to continue assisting up to 200 homeless adults with disabilities a month.** General Assistance prioritizes housing while providing case management, minimal cash assistance for incidentals to ensure a safe and healthy environment for individuals experiencing a personal crisis.

***Background:*** The 2016 Legislative Assembly unanimously passed HB 4042 to revive the General Assistance Program. As directed by the legislation, DHS convened an advisory body, and has begun helping homeless individuals with disabilities apply for SSI and/or SSDI. Once the individual's federal disability benefits are approved, the state is reimbursed for the upfront service costs. While the Governor's 2017-19 Recommended Budget eliminates funding for the General Assistance program, the current program is part of the continuing service level (CSL). HB 2959 is a vehicle to update the fiscal impact for the CSL.

## **PAST & CURRENT SUPPORTERS**

- AARP of Oregon • Advocacy Coalition of Seniors and People with Disabilities • ASSIST Program • Central City Concern • Community Action Partnership of Oregon • Disability Rights Oregon • Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon • Housing Alliance • Northwest Pilot Project • Oregon Associations of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities • Oregon Center for Christian Voices • Oregon Food Bank • Oregon Law Center • Oregon Opportunity Network • Oregon Women's Rights Coalition • Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon • Partnership for Safety and Justice • ShelterCare • Street Roots • Welcome Home

### **Contact Information**

John Mullin, Oregon Law Center | [jmullin@oregonlawcenter.org](mailto:jmullin@oregonlawcenter.org) | 503-867-6236

Phillip Kennedy-Wong, Oregon Food Bank | [pkennedy-wong@oregonfoodbank.org](mailto:pkennedy-wong@oregonfoodbank.org) | 971-645- 2601