



March 28, 2017

Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Human Services  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street  
Salem OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward & Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of O4AD, the Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging & Disabilities, and our 17 member Area Agencies serving Older Adults and People with Disabilities in Oregon, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 5526, the Department of Human Services budget bill. O4AD supports the need for adequate funding to serve our vulnerable populations with independence, dignity, choice and safety.

The Governor's Recommended Budget offered cuts to programs which stand to jeopardize the very values that Oregon's system of long-term services and supports were built on. The Governor's Budget would slash funding for Oregon's seniors in Oregon Project Independence (OPI) by 75% and completely eliminate this program for People with Disabilities. In fiscal year 2013-15, OPI served over 5,000 individuals and since July 2015, the program has served over 4,000 individuals. The majority of these individuals would be income eligible for Medicaid but choose services through this cost efficient alternative while remaining in their own homes and communities. OPI operates through the work of over 1,500 Home Care Workers as well as Home Care Agencies and offers these services at a tremendous cost savings to the State General Fund when compared with services through Medicaid. Services through OPI cost an average of \$332 per month per person. Medicaid services range from \$803 for in-home services to \$3,168 per month in **State General Fund** per month per person. The OPI program is an example of how Oregon has led the way in providing smart investments in long-term services and supports. We cannot afford to dismantle these programs.

Oregon has been a leader in long term services and supports. Our state has prioritized person centered care that recognizes home and community based services as not only the preferred option for many but often the most cost efficient choice. This win-win approach has netted millions upon millions in savings for Oregon since our move away from unnecessary or premature institutional based care for seniors and people with disabilities. We cannot afford to move away from those values, priorities and smart choices by destabilizing the aging and disability services network in our state. This network is facing increasingly high demand for services, increased needs of individuals, rapidly increasing workload for our eligibility workers, case managers and field staff, limited options in community based care to allow people to stay in their community and greater demand for Home Care Workers.

As you continue to develop your budget recommendations and priorities for Oregon's older adults and people with disabilities, we ask that you remain committed to the values that have made Oregon a national model for care. We ask that you protect the independence, dignity, choice and safety of our Older Adults and People with Disabilities by strengthening and supporting the aging and disability network of services and supports. Oregon has shown the rest of the nation that if we maintain these values and focus on the individual, we not only provide better care, but also realize lower costs and a better quality of life for those we serve.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of protecting services and supports for Oregon's older adults and people with disabilities.

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Legislative Chair, O4AD  
Co-Executive Director, NorthWest Senior &  
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