

# Department of County Human Services

Liesl Wendt, Director



To: Co-Chairs Senator Steiner Hayward and Representative Rayfield and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means SubCommittee on Human Services

Date: March 28, 2017

RE: HB 5526

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The Multnomah County Department of County Human Services (DCHS) supports valuable services for older adults and people with disabilities that ensure safety and save public resources. Particularly, we support maintaining service levels for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and continuing current funding levels for Oregon Project Independence (OPI).

Last year Multnomah County served 5,755 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

IDD caseworkers keep people safe by connecting them with Medicaid-funded residential, in-home services. The caseworkers develop trusted relationships with clients that form the foundation for ongoing stability. That stability leads to opportunities for growth, enjoyment of meaningful relationships, education, work, and full participation in our communities.

On a regional level Multnomah County also serves as the lead for the Region I Crisis network of 104 crisis network providers from Washington, Clackamas, Columbia, Clatsop, and Multnomah counties. This is a collaborative effort to serve individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others, or when local resources are lacking. Region I providers are able to accept individuals on same day or within one week. Without these services, people in crisis face a stay in the state hospital, the Stabilization and Crisis Unit, hospitals, mental health facilities, jail, or time on the street. All very costly and potentially unsafe alternatives.

Investments we make in both quality casework and our Region I Provider Network add tangible value back into communities.

Secondly, DCHS supports Oregon Project Independence (OPI). OPI is one of the most cost effective services in Oregon's long-term services and support system. OPI provides services such as housekeeping, personal care, grocery shopping, and adult respite services that keep people in their homes instead of Medicaid funded facilities.

A 2012 study found that OPI consumers use one quarter of the average hours used by a Medicaid recipient. If OPI is cut, many of these people will no longer be able to remain in their homes and will rely on far more expensive public services.

In Multnomah County we currently have 765 individuals whose lives are enhanced by OPI and

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the OPI Expansion Pilot services. Proposed reductions, such as those suggested in the co-chairs budget framework language and in the Governor's Recommended Budget would eliminate up to 615 people from services in our County. If the program were to be eliminated, individuals would likely go on Medicaid immediately or eventually once they had no more money to afford what they need.

Maintaining OPI makes fiscal sense and most importantly it makes sense for hundreds people who are able to stay in their homes and connected with their community.

Lastly, we want to emphasize that Multnomah County cannot afford to provide these services alone. We need both state funding and the critical partnership of DHS. This partnership keeps people with disabilities and older adults safe and is definitely a wise investment of public dollars.