



March 27, 2017

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

RE: SB 5526 - the Department of Human Services budget bill

Co-Chairs Senator Steiner-Hayward and Representative Rayfield, and
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services:

Thank you for your continued service to the State of Oregon and your leadership in the state Legislature. As you take on the herculean task of negotiating the state's budget over the next few months, we ask that you consider the impacts of any additional cuts to the funding of services to seniors and adults with disabilities will do to our state's most vulnerable citizens.

The Lane Council of Governments' Senior and Disability Services Division (S&DS) provides essential services to Lane County seniors and persons with disabilities. The mission of S&DS is *to advocate for older adults and persons with disabilities and to provide to them quality services and information that promote dignity, independence, and choice.* These seniors and persons with disabilities rely on the services we provide to live with independence, dignity, choice and safety.

The Governor's Recommended Budget provides for cuts to programs which stand to jeopardize the services LCOG's S&DS Division provides and destroy 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. In other words, **OPI provides 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.

We simply cannot afford to dismantle these programs and move away from the values, priorities and smart choices made by Oregon and destabilize 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.

Thank you for your consideration. I greatly appreciate your tireless support on behalf of all Oregonians and your commitment to creating the best and most inclusive budget possible for seniors and people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Wilson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brenda Wilson
Executive Director