

*Governor's Commission on Senior Services/Oregon Disability Commission
United Seniors of Oregon/Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens*

**APD/DHS Public Hearing
Joins Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
March 28th, 2017**

I'm Dr. Jim Davis representing the Governor's Commission on Senior Services, Oregon Disability Commission, United Seniors of Oregon, and Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens, all members of the Campaign for Oregon Seniors and People with Disabilities. We are here today to express our strong support for maintaining Oregon's nationally-acclaimed senior and disability services system at continuing service levels, and to oppose cuts to programs such as Oregon Project Independence and General Assistance.

Oregon has built a national model for in-home and community-based care, ranking among the lowest in per capita expenditure on long term care nationally, often spending as much as a half or a third less than nursing care, and reaching far greater numbers of clients through "continuum of care" options, including home and personal care, community-based facilities, case management, outreach, home and congregate meals, transportation, information and referral, counseling, legal assistance, rehabilitation, employment, and volunteer services. Consumers are in a system that provides them with choices of how they can meet their lifestyle preferences and health care needs. Community-based care has been a **cost-effective investment** that helps respond to the physical and emotional problems of the elderly and the disabled, allowing them to remain in their own communities and live independent lives. It has saved the state millions of dollars in health care costs related to hospitalization and institutionalization. The model has based its success on its ability to utilize a combination of state and federal funds to be a national leader in the delivery of community-based programs.

In our dedication to this community-based system, we **strongly oppose any cuts** to the Aging and People with Disabilities/Department of Human Services (APD/DHS) programs and urge the protection of Oregon's national model home and community-based long term care system for seniors and people with disabilities. We must preserve at all costs the APD system emphasis on seniors and people with disabilities remaining independent and avoiding premature placement in higher levels of long term care, and that there be adequate consideration for caseload growth load, especially as the boomers explode into their older years.

We strongly **support the maintenance of all continuing-level statewide and local senior and disabled services**. We hope the Legislature will make funding of senior and disability services a top priority and oppose the Governor's recommendations for the dismantling of **Oregon Project Independence** down to the lowest possible maintenance levels, denying thousands of seniors and

people with disabilities the services that help them remain independent in their own communities at a time when the senior and disability populations are growing exponentially.

OPI has been the cornerstone of the SPD/DHS system for more than 40 years. OPI clients tend to be individuals who have fallen through the cracks of the system, often the near-poor who don't qualify for Medicaid. But if OPI clients are allowed to spend down their savings and end up Medicaid-eligible, it will cost the state up to 5 times as much to care for them in more intensive care settings. We urge your support of continuing service-level funding of Oregon Project Independence at \$26 million instead of the \$5 million recommended by the Governor's Budget, maintaining needed long term care services for elders that do not qualify or choose not to apply for Medicaid.

We must also express our disappointment that certain other critical services are not recommended for funding. After finally getting refunded in a pilot project, the Governor's Recommendation budget cut out further funding for **the General Assistance Program**, which provides important support for very low-income people with severe disabilities.

We also want to see support for **community gatekeeper programs** that allow neighbors, grocery clerks, postal workers, and many other members of our communities to provide needed and very cost-effective support for elders and people with disabilities. We would hope that at a minimum we can have some statewide coordination efforts that can help local communities develop their own gatekeeper programs.

In the Governor's recommended budget, **residential care facilities reimbursements** are held at a flat rate, which essentially equals a budget cut by the rate of inflation for assisted living, residential care facilities and adult foster homes. To make ends meet, residential care facilities already must depend more and more on private pay residents to subsidize Medicaid residents.

These cuts do not provide for a **future direction** on how we meet the needs of our rapidly growing senior and disability populations, which will cause an ever-increasing, need for services and significant caseload increases. Oregon's senior population growth is among the highest in the nation. The number of Oregonians age 65 and older is expected to increase from about 14% of the population to 21% by the year 2020. The 85 and above age group - those most likely to need an increased level of services - is the fastest growing age segment. While the service needs increase among the senior population, SPD/DHS is also witnessing a tremendous growth in the number of persons with disabilities under the age of 65 in need of long term care services; with nearly one-quarter of the SPD/DHS clientele falling into this category.

We urge you to support the maintenance of Aging and People with Disabilities/DHS community-based services.