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AARP Oregon Testimony on HB 3370 - Housing with Services

April 6, 2017

TO: House Committee on Human Services and Housing, Rep. Keny-Guyer, Chair

FROM: Jon Bartholomew, Government Relations Director, AARP Oregon

On behalf of the over half million AARP members ages 50+ statewide, we urge you to support HB 3370 which would allow the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) to track the emergence of a new model of long term supports and services. This legislation is a result of the Housing with Services Task Force Report that was produced by the task force mandated by 2015 legislation, HB 2547.

As the task force report states:

“Housing with Services is a concept that, in recent times, has emerged as an alternative means to provide services and supports to consumers who are older adults and younger adults with disabilities. Nationally, organizations such as AARP and LeadingAge have recognized and collaborated on several models of service coordination. More recent efforts by the federal Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services’ Innovation Accelerator Program provide assistance to states to develop programs connecting housing to health. At least one state, Minnesota, has a statute addressing Housing with Services as a model of service and support coordination.

In Oregon, a pilot project began in 2014 by Housing with Services LLC, partially funded by federal grants through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ State Innovation Model grant. The pilot serves 1,400 older adults and people with disabilities who live in 11 publicly-subsidized apartment buildings in Portland. The pilot’s objectives include increasing housing stability, improving access to health and social services, improving health outcomes, increasing resident access to mental health, addiction and culturally specific services, increasing resident and consumer engagement, delaying entry or re-entry into institutional levels of care, and reducing health care costs.

AARP Oregon is very intrigued by the pilot project, and we appreciate the commitment to transparency and quality care that the leaders of the pilot project have exhibited. However, this led us to realize that this represents a new model of long term care provision that is not monitored and regulated in the same way as other settings, such as Assisted Living Communities. As such, there is no way of knowing if there are other projects in the private sector which are advertising themselves as “Housing with Services” and providing or offering care to tenants without any resident protections.

In settings like Assisted Living, residents have established rights, and access to the Long Term Care Ombudsman to help mediate conflicts. This is due to the increased vulnerability of the residents in these settings. Once a congregate housing setting, like a senior housing apartment building, becomes a service delivery setting or coordinator as well, the residents may become more reliant on the management to have their needs met. This increases the risk of harm to the residents.

Real Possibilities

HB 3370 does not aim to regulate this new model of service provision. It merely creates a process for DHS to track entities providing housing with services, so that they can monitor them to determine if any regulation may be needed in the future. The bill provides that other agencies provide information to DHS on already licensed and registered settings that fit the definition of a housing with services project, so those entities do not have to do the registration themselves. The bill also does not impose any new requirements or fees on entities that register.

AARP Oregon has a great deal of interest in seeing innovative models of long term care service delivery succeed. Success includes quality of care and the independence, choice, and dignity of the residents of any care setting. HB 3370 is designed to ensure that the state agency responsible for regulating long term care will have the information it needs to ensure the success of this new emerging model of care. We urge you to support HB 3370.