



Testimony on SB 1058 – Expanding scope of abuse investigations

April 12, 2017

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), we are neutral on SB 1058, pending amendments to clarify the scope and responsibilities for expanding abuse investigations. We are supportive of the intent to prevent ongoing abuse or other bad consequences experienced by people with mental illness or substance use disorders and of aligning the abuse definitions with the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities system. We also support including patients at the Oregon State Hospital in the definition of the vulnerable population.

The areas of concern are in the potentially broad interpretation of (f) verbal abuse and (g) financial exploitation. The investigation of these two categories, together with a widely inclusive definition of a person with a mental illness as the target population, will result in a significant workload increase for community mental health programs and other behavioral health entities in the community. Narrowing the vulnerable population definition by severity and chronicity of mental illness through a screening process to assess capacity was one remedy discussed among the stakeholders. This does not address the resource problem, though, as there are no dedicated abuse investigators in the behavioral health system. The DD system workload model accounts for all aspects of abuse investigation: screening, documentation, response, ongoing investigations, report writing, redaction and closure and has dedicated funding for abuse investigators.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1058 and we look forward to working with OAAPI on amendments to clarify scope, responsibilities, and fiscal impact of expanding abuse investigations in the community.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez

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Director, AOCMHP