



May 8, 2017

TO: Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair  
House Committee on Health Care  
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director  
RE: HB 275-A

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is Oregon's federally-funded *Protection and Advocacy* office that provides legal-based advocacy services to Oregonians with disabilities. Most of those we serve either receive or are eligible for SSI or SSDI. Recipients are thereby eligible for health care coverage to pay for needed mental and physical health services as well as services and supports that allow them to live in the community.

DRO strongly supports the policy that underlies ORS 192.576: to allow applicants for SSI and SSDI to be successful in obtaining those benefits, when deserved. Most applications for benefits are unsuccessful at first, while most appeals of initial denials are successful. The greatest barrier to getting benefits when applying is to gather and organize all needed medical records to support the claim.

With the assistance of an attorney who is trained to access, organize and advocate the significance of medical records, applicants greatly increase their chance of success at any stage of the process. Many applicants are simply too inexperienced, disorganized or confused to identify and gather the needed materials for a successful case. Often, an applicant will forget or miss essential medical records during their initial application.

The importance of this fact for SB 275-A is that, on appeal, many necessary records may not have been obtained from before the date of application. As written, HB 275-A would, in effect, penalize the claimant for being incapable of, or unsuccessful in, identifying all of the records they need for a successful application. In many cases, the incapacity that underlay the person's eligibility for benefits is responsible for the initial denial that leads to an appeal.

For that reason, DRO believes that SB 275-A should be amended to state that, in addition to the other free copies provided, one free copy of an individual's health information that was created at another time shall be provided upon an certification from the person or their representative that specifies the records requested and explains why they are directly relevant to the application for benefits.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.