

## **HB 4041 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

### **House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development**

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**Prepared By:** Laura Kentnesse, LPRO Analyst

**Sub-Referral To:** Joint Committee On Ways and Means

**Meeting Dates:** 2/8

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#### **WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Establishes Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities (Task Force). Requires Task Force establish policies and strategies for increasing opportunities for employment of people with disabilities in state government; evaluate state programs related to employing people with disabilities; and report findings and make recommendations to the committees of the Legislative Assembly related to workforce. Sunsets Task Force December 31, 2020.

#### **ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

##### **EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

-1 Reduces quantity of Oregon Disabilities Commission appointments from six to five members, and adds Task Force member that is a designee of the Director of Human Services with experience administering vocational rehabilitation programs. Clarifies that Task Force policies and strategies for increasing opportunities for employment means competitive integrated employment. Adds emergency clause.

##### **BACKGROUND:**

People with disabilities experience unemployment rates far above national and state averages. There are currently 350,586 working age individuals with disabilities living in Oregon, and 35.7 percent are employed in comparison to 72 percent of working age Oregonians without disabilities. Consequently, people with disabilities experience poverty and economic insecurity in substantial numbers. Many adults and youth with disabilities express an ability, desire, and willingness to work in the community and contribute to the economy, but experience significant barriers to employment. Oregon law aspires to reduce employment barriers through a policy of affirmative action, declaring state government as a leader in employing individuals from groups that have experienced past and present discrimination, including people with disabilities (ORS 243.305). However, Oregon does not currently have a comprehensive strategy pertaining to how the state can be a model employer of individuals with disabilities.

Several state agencies work to support individuals with disabilities in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Human Services Vocation Rehabilitation (VR) program and the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) are the two primary state agencies responsible for assisting Oregonians with disabilities to achieve, maintain and advance in employment and independence. The VR program serves 16,000 disabled individuals per year; placing more than 2,000 individuals into jobs in 2016. It works with both consumers and employers to facilitate job placement. The OCB provides specialized vocational rehabilitation training services to Oregonians who are blind and need to maintain employment or return to work. In addition, the OCB works with businesses to attract, hire and retain workers who are blind. The Oregon Disabilities Commission (ORS 185.150) is a governor-appointed commission that is charged with coordinating public and private organizations serving individuals with disabilities. The commission is responsible for advising the governor, Department of Human Services, Oregon Health Authority, and Legislative Assembly on services and resources needed to serve individuals with disabilities.