



February 6, 2018

TO: Senator Kathleen Taylor, Chair
Senate Committee on Workforce
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director
RE: Support for SB 1534

Disability Rights Oregon advocates for the civil and legal rights of Oregonians with disabilities. One of the major legal rights that protect individuals with disabilities is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In 1999, the US Supreme Court ruled that the "integration mandate" of Title II of the ADA requires government services for recipients with disabilities to be provided in settings that are as integrated into their communities as medically and financially possible. So, for example, if a person can safely stay in their home with the assistance of in-home care, the person should not be required to live in a care facility.

Most Oregonians want to stay in their homes for as long they can, if home is safe and comfortable. If the person experiences limitations in functioning, this may require a well-trained in-home care worker. These workers need to have the necessary skills to provide assistance with daily activities and must also understand that the person receiving the services gets to direct their care and has fundamental rights of safety and privacy.

As the average age of Oregonians gets higher, there will be more demand for care and a need for an adequate number of workers who are well-trained. For those whose services are publically funded, in-home services are not only less expensive but also, when clinically appropriate, a legal right.

On Monday, a front page story in The Oregonian reported on the case of Michael Williamson, an Air Force veteran with ALS who has stayed home with his family for 17 years with the assistance of in-home care. The VA decided to stop providing the service despite no change in his condition. The story highlights the compounded tragedy of unnecessarily forcing a person out of their home and into a distant institution. Oregonians deserve better: safe and effective in-home services from well-trained workers.