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**ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS**  
For more information contact Cherryl Ramirez at 503-399-7201

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**Testimony in support of SB 1526**

***Parental Rights for People with Disabilities***

February 6, 2018

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), I would like to express our support for SB 1526, with the -1 amendment. As the Arc of the US states:

“The right to marry and raise children have long been recognized as fundamental under the Constitution of the United States. While these rights apply to parents with intellectual disability, their parental rights are sometimes terminated solely upon the determination that a parent has an intellectual disability. Often, there is no assessment of the parents’ actual abilities or the likelihood that they could successfully parent with appropriate supports. Contrary to what many people think, people with intellectual disability can be good parents. Field and Sanchez (1999) suggest that the ability of a parent to provide adequate child care cannot be predicted on the basis of intelligence alone. As with parents without disabilities, the ability to parent successfully depends on a wide range of factors.”

The service and legal systems have the responsibility to help ensure that all parents with disabilities have equal access to opportunities to learn parenting skills and supports needed to create a safe and caring home. Supports must be provided to both the parents and the children. Removing children from a home because the parent has a disability is a violation of the ADA. In Oregon, we must value keeping children in their homes, with their parents, building in both natural and paid supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1526-1 to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and their children. We believe more work needs to be done in this area and offer any assistance we can provide in assuring individuals have the support they need.

Sincerely,

*Cherryl L. Ramirez*

Cherryl L. Ramirez  
Director, AOCMHP