



TO: Senate President Peter Courtney; House Speaker Tina Kotek; Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod; House Republican Leader Christine Drazan; & Members of the Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
FROM: Disability Rights Oregon
DATE: June 22, 2020
RE: Support for Sections 48 to 50 of Legislative Concept 45

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your efforts to safeguard Oregonians during a worldwide pandemic. I write in support of Sections 48 to 50 of Legislative Concept 45.

Since the beginning of this public health crisis, Disability Rights Oregon has seen a steady stream of substantiated complaints of discrimination and bias in the health care system and denial of rights of people with disabilities, older adults, and people of color. These complaints are widespread, coming from every corner of the State and from nearly every hospital system.

Yet, when we review the reporting on COVID-19 by the Oregon Health Authority, there is no information reported about the number of deaths, cases, or hospitalizations caused by COVID-19 among people with disabilities. This is deeply troubling.

ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

Disability Rights Oregon is a statewide nonprofit that upholds the civil rights of 950,000 people with disabilities in Oregon to live, work, and engage in the community. Disability Rights Oregon serves as a watchdog over state agencies and institutions as we work to transform systems, policies, and practices to give more people the opportunity to reach their full potential. For more than 40 years, the organization has served as Oregon's federally authorized and mandated Protection & Advocacy System. Disability Rights Oregon is committed to ensuring the civil rights of all people are protected and enforced, including in healthcare settings during the pandemic.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC REPORTING

In 2013, the Legislature acknowledged the importance of accountability and transparency in health reporting when it passed H.B. 2134 to direct the Oregon Health Authority and the Department of Human Services to collaborate in standardizing and improving demographic data collection. This effort was called REAL-D data collection because it includes information about race, ethnicity, language, disability, and other categories.

Yet, seven years later, when we look at the Oregon Health Authority's public reporting on COVID-19, there is no data being reported by the State on the number of people with disabilities who are being tested, dying, and hospitalized. This is shameful and deeply alarming to the disability community

because it raises real questions about what is being hidden. We urge the Legislature to require such reporting on COVID-19.

DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON'S SUPPORT FOR SECTIONS 48 TO 50 OF L.C. 45

Now that a Special Session is being convened, Disability Rights Oregon requests the Legislature to enact Sections 48 to 50 of Legislative Concept 45, which:

- Require data collection on race, ethnicity, language, and disability.
- Require reporting to the Oregon Health Authority and the Department of Human Services of such data.
- Create an enforcement mechanism to require compliance.

DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON'S FEEDBACK ON SECTION 51 OF L.C. 45

Disability Rights Oregon urges the Committee to remove Section 51 or to set a repeal date that follows a vaccine being widely available in Oregon. The data collection required under Sections 48 to 50 are important during COVID-19, irrespective of the expiration of a state of emergency issued by the Governor.

Disability Rights Oregon stands ready to work with you in these efforts.