



March 11, 2019

Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer  
House Committee on Human Services and Housing  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street  
Salem OR 97301

Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

O4AD, the Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging & Disabilities, would like to thank the Committee and Chair for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Gatekeeper program. O4AD's members were the providers of the Gatekeeper program in Oregon when the funding was previously in place.

The Gatekeeper Program, an evidence-based program, trains employees of community businesses and organizations to recognize and refer at-risk older adults and people with disabilities to help and assistance when risk factors are present. This program has been replicated nationally and internationally. The program provides training to individuals who come into contact with these groups such as postal workers, meter readers, bank tellers and emergency responders, in how to recognize warning signs and make referrals for help. This program offers a 'first line of defense' against situations that are potentially harmful but preventable including abuse.

Research in the outcomes of the Gatekeeper program has shown significant improvements for individuals served including lowering of social isolation, decrease in depression symptoms, and a decrease in suicide ideation. It is community prevention and intervention at work. We are happy to provide that research if requested.

In the short time period when the Gatekeeper program was provided statewide, 2014-2016, over 800 businesses and organizations and over 1,000 individuals became Gatekeepers. Over 2,000 Gatekeeper calls had been received by ADRCs including over 200 calls that required follow up by Adult Protective Services due to possible abuse or neglect. These are important referrals that may not have happened without the Gatekeeper program in place. The response from the business community was tremendously positive.

Oregon is experiencing a dramatic increase in the population of people age 65 and over. By 2025, at least 20 percent of our total population will fall into this demographic. Unfortunately, with that increase of demographic, we also have experienced a drastic increase in abuse of older adults. Between 2013 and 2017, there has been a 62% increase in the number of allegations investigated annually. And of those, 70% involved allegations of abuse in the community. This startling data point demonstrates the need for supporting abuse prevention at the community level, which is the core of the Gatekeeper program.

O4AD worked with the Department of Human Services in the development of their Policy Option Package to

reinstate the Gatekeeper program. This collaborative work was done to look at how best the program could be implemented knowing that limited resources would possibly be available to make the program as efficient as possible while still delivering the core program statewide. We would encourage any effort to reinstate the Gatekeeper program to look at the program design recommendations within the Gatekeeper Policy Option Package as this conversation continues.

Oregon has a well-recognized tradition of honoring the independence, dignity and choice of our older adults and people with disabilities. Increasing and improving the safety for that same group only furthers our work towards that goal.

O4AD is happy to provide any additional information on this program. Please contact Nicole Palmateer Hazelbaker with any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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