

March 18, 2019

House Committee on Human Services & Housing – Public Hearing on HB 3122

Good afternoon, and thank you Chair Kenny-Guyer and Committee Members,

My name is Barry Fox-Quamme, and I am here today representing The Association of Oregon Centers for Independent Living (AOCIL). I live in Damascus, Clackamas County.

I'm here to support House Bill 3122!

Many have travelled from across Oregon to this hearing. They bring unique, inspiring stories of lives changed by working with peers at Centers for Independent Living.

Our two panels today will speak of barriers to living independently, as well as social and health disparities faced daily by people with disabilities, through no fault of their own! These are the voiceless who fall through the cracks, 14% of Oregon's population, almost 600,000 people. Implementing HB 3122 will improve the lives of 10s of thousands of people each year!

This legislation expands Center-based, cross-disability, peer services in Oregon over the next 10 years!

I have seen the unique and powerful return that comes from investing in people with disabilities . . . as coaches and role models, . . . as mentors, and peer counselors.

HB 3122 expands existing services for Oregon's network of seven centers, AND it also establishes those services in unserved regions like the Gorge, the Oregon Coast, and here in Salem and the central valley.

We especially thank Representative Rob Nosse for sponsoring HB 3122. And we ask each of you, on both sides of the aisle, to champion this legislation! Empowering people with disabilities is bipartisan!

As ILR executive director in Portland, I have learned from advocates like Steve Weiss and Jim McConnell, and from 6 years of service on the governor's State Independent Living Council (the SILC).

"A person with disabilities, serving people with disabilities" is a formula that works! The SILC's a vision for expanding the peer independent living services in Oregon to all 36 counties fills in the cracks!

Empowering centers to reach more Oregonians is all about fairness and civil rights. HB 3122 is built on minimal funding parity for centers. This parity compliments growing DHS budgets and ensures a diversified, cost effective safety net for the most vulnerable. Let's work together to better serve all!

As I conclude, I could explain more about why this is personal for me, about how I survived a brain and spinal infection in 1998, and only slowly returned to work.

I could share more about how I found my voice at ILR and how I am so inspired by my co-workers with disabilities, and by my colleagues around the state. But my time now passes to other advocates here today.

Thank you

Barry Fox-Quamme

AOCIL