

Consumer Support for Oregon House Bill 3122

The following is respectfully submitted to be included in the Public Record as supplemental Public Comment to hearings held in March 2019 re HB 3122

March 15, 2019

The Oregon Legislature, House of Representatives
Committee of Human Services and Housing
Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
900 Court St. NE Room H-272
Salem OR 97301

Honorable Chair Kenny-Guyer and Committee Members:

I am writing you as a person with disabilities, and am in support of HB 3122. I experience barriers to living independently in a rural community, which could adversely affect my health if I did not have Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living.

I was diagnosed with HIV in 1992, and with a depression disorder in 2001. In 1992 there were not many medications for HIV as today, I thought my life was over. I spiraled into a major depression episode, and had even attempted suicide several times thinking that I did not want to die a horrible death with AIDS. I had no support from my family, and had family members steer away from touching or kissing me on the cheek, making comment like "No wonder he has AIDS, he is gay". These comments were very hurtful, heartbreaking, disappointing, and detrimental to my health. I isolated myself from my family, friends, and co-workers. The only support I had was my current partner, who was also diagnosed with HIV 2 months prior to my diagnosis. We thought we would never have any friends, family relationships, and that we were on our own.

In 2005 we found Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living (EOCIL). Not only did we not find support for living with HIV, but had support from them as a gay couple. EOCIL got us to HIV Specialist, Insurance Coverage, Lab appointments to get regularly tested to monitor our disease, and gas to get to and from medical appointments. Living in Eastern Oregon has not been the easiest in living with HIV, most physicians are out of state that specialize in HIV care and treatment, which requires a lot of travel to and from doctor visits.

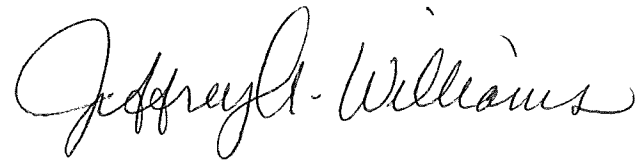
The outpouring concern, friendship, and love that came from EOCIL was all in encompassing. We could not believe that we finally found an agency that truly cared about our health, well-being, and we felt that we were in the midst of family. EOCIL has always made sure my partner, and I have made it to our doctors, also providing financial assistance to use when needed.

In July of 2014, EOCIL took a chance on me providing me employment with them. From the minute that I started working for EOCIL, I knew this was the place for me to work until I retired. I started working for EOCIL as an Intake Coordinator, a year and a half later moved up to Care Coordinator, and now am the Program Manager to this day. EOCIL has instilled confidence in me that I had not had before. And has given me the opportunity to instill their values of client self-empowerment to others. I truly believe that EOCIL came into my life for a reason, and am indebted to them fully. I believe in my heart they saved my life.

I hope you will support HB 3122, it means so much to the clients they have helped, and the lives touched by them.

PLEASE SUPPORT & CHAMPION HB 3122!

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey A. Williams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully Submitted,".

County: Umatilla