



ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

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SB 1039 – Authorizes appointment of Health Care Advocate

April 4, 2109

Dear Chair Gelser and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), we are writing in support of SB 1039, which strengthens support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in making health care related decisions.

AOCMHP's membership includes 32 Community Developmental Disabilities Programs (CDDPs) across Oregon, operated through Community Mental Health Programs, by not-for-profit entities that contract with local government or that contract directly with the DHS/ODDS. CDDPs help assure the protection and safety of over 25,000 Oregonians with I/DD in collaboration with families and providers and provide case management services to over 19,000 children and adults eligible for services.

SB 1039 would provide help in making health care decisions for people with I/DD who have been denied critical services due to their disability who do not have a guardian or other legal representative to speak on their behalf. CDDPs report people have been denied procedures in the doctor's or dental office and at the hospital. SB 1039 creates health care advocates that can assist individuals in making health care decisions from someone who they know and trust with the help of their individual service plan (ISP) team. Oregon rules have allowed for health care representatives in the past, and it has made a critical, often lifesaving difference in the lives of people with I/DD. SB 1039 would set high standards for making health care decisions on behalf of individuals with I/DD, ensuring their rights are protected.

Another important aspect of this bill is that it includes a health care advocate for individuals living in the family home or on their own. Families often do not have resources to become guardians, so the adult is unable to access mental health care or other health care supports due to the individual's inability to make health care decisions. In many situations, an individual does not need a full legal guardianship, which takes away the person's rights for other freedoms. They only need assistance in making health related decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for SB 1039, and for the proposed amendments we understand are to be submitted.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Ramirez
Director, AOCMHP

Sarah Jane Owens
DD Specialist, AOCMHP