



Advancing Opportunities

February 3, 2021

To: Chair Holvey, Chair, House Business and Labor Committee

From: Leslie Sutton, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: Support for HB 2151 – Task force for the State Model Employer Program for the Employment of People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 40 organizations and individuals across Oregon that come together to advocate for the services to further the values outlined in ORS 427.007: to support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to exercise self-determination, living and working in the most integrated community settings, and providing services for families to raise their children at home. Our members represent advocacy groups (including self-advocacy organizations), family peer supports, DD residential providers, DD supported employment providers, and Support Services Brokerages.

Oregon is strongest when all people can find meaningful work and be members of their communities. Work creates a sense of community, achievement, and independence. Work is something that all Oregonians are expected from a young age to achieve. Everyone is asked “what do you want to be when you grow up?”

We support HB 2151 to create a task force for the State Model Employer Program for Employing People with IDD because despite Oregon adopting an “Employment First” policy to prioritize employment for people with IDD, it is hard for people with IDD to find work – even with the State of Oregon. The state, as one of our largest employers, employs only 0.3% of people with IDD compared to 2.5% for local governments. A State Model Employer Program can create more state employment opportunities for people with IDD and lead by example as it creates a process to direct appoint people with IDD to open positions in approved job classifications.

HB 2151 would lead to more people with IDD employed in state government by doing the following:

- establishing a seven-member task force that will coordinate and provide leadership to **increase inclusion** in the State of Oregon workforce of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities through the State as Model Employer Program.
- submitting a report with the task force recommendations to the legislature and Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) no later than no later than September 15, 2022.
- ODHS must establish the State as a Model Employer program on January 1, 2023.



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We are also confident that the voices of people who need to be on this task force will be included. The bill requires task force representation from people with IDD who receive IDD services, representatives from relevant state agencies and also allows one of our members, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities to appoint one person to the task force. The Council creates policy and community change so that people with IDD and their families can live, learn and work in Oregon's communities. The Council takes direction from people with IDD and their families.

When we expect people to succeed, they will. With the right supports, everyone can succeed in work. Sometimes building equity, you have to do things differently. Creating new paths to state employment for people with IDD acknowledges and fulfills a commitment to people with IDD that they are welcome in Oregon's workforce while creating accessible processes to ensure they can find jobs.

Through Oregon's Employment First initiative, Oregon has built a system of support that will allow Oregonians with IDD to succeed at work. Now, it is time to remove barrier to actually getting employment with the state. HB 2151 will achieve this by creating a task force to make Oregon a State a Model Employer and we respectfully ask that you pass HB 2151. With high expectations and an accessible route to actually get jobs with the State of Oregon, people with IDD will succeed and be valuable members of the state's workforce.