



**Testimony in support of SB 579**

**Guardianship services for defendants unable to aid and assist in their defense**

March 31, 2021

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), we are in full support of SB 579, which will provide guardianship services for defendants unable to aid and assist in their defense, and the -2 amendment, which removes “community restoration” from the bill language. AOCMHP represents CMHPs statewide, who provide services for Aid & Assist clients, including community consultations and restoration services, and helping individuals engage in the most appropriate level of care and to locate safe living arrangements.

Some of our Aid & Assist clients would greatly benefit from public guardians, but the funding for guardianships has not been available and so public guardians are a scarce resource. Those individuals who are found never able to aid and assist in their own defense are a clear population needing public guardians, and we are grateful to the Oregon Public Guardian for expanding services to this particular group. We look forward to collaborating closely to ensure the best possible care for people who are released into the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 579-2, and we urge your support.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez  
Director, AOCMHP