

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery Committee:

I am writing a letter in support of Senate Resolution 201 to recognize Kathryn Weit for the tremendous contributions she made to improve the lives of Oregonians who experience disabilities and their families.

Kathryn was a trailblazer who helped pass monumental initiatives to change the lives of people with disabilities. Among other things, Kathryn helped close Oregon's institution, she developed policies to support children and families, and she helped create the brokerage system and the family networks. Thanks to her leadership and initiative, my son who experiences a developmental disability can live at home with his family in a loving environment, he is able to access a full life in his community, and he has a bright and positive future ahead of him.

I first met Kathryn at Partners in Policymaking, a leadership training for parents of children who experience disabilities and self-advocates. While attending this training, I learned about the history of the social justice movement and Oregon's sad history of institutionalizing people who experience disability. While listening and soaking this in, a fellow classmate who was sitting next to me said, "I used to live at Fairfield [Oregon's institution], and I never want to go back."

This left an indelible impression on me, as did much of the training, which Kathryn was instrumental in organizing and facilitating. Not only was Kathryn a tremendous advocate who could work to bring people to consensus, she also left a legacy by empowering other parents to share their stories to bring about change. There is now a contingency of parents—many of whom have never met Kathryn but who are forever grateful to her for the barriers she removed—who are now working to make positive changes within their communities.

I will be forever grateful to Kathryn for helping me learn about the past, for encouraging me to look beyond my son's label and helping me dream big for my son, and for inspiring me to pay it forward and help other families in our community.

I encourage you to pass Senate Resolution 201 to honor Kathryn's lifetime of work in the disability field, and her significant accomplishments which opened the door to greater opportunities for people with disabilities and their families.

Sincerely,
Laura Dahill