



February 1, 2022

TO: Senate Committee On Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery
FR: Disability Right Oregon
RE: SR 201, In memoriam: Kathryn Weit, 1947-2021

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, Senators Kennemer, Lieber, and Sollman,

Kathryn Weit's contribution to the state of Oregon can not be overstated. She was a tireless advocate for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She helped bring about profound changes in how Oregon provides I/DD services and educated countless legislators, educators, and future advocates on the history of I/DD services in Oregon and the values of self-determination and integration.

Since 1977, Disability Rights Oregon has worked to transform Oregon to be a place where people with I/DD have equality of opportunity, full participation, and the ability to exercise meaningful choice. Through her organization of the "Mothers from Hell," leadership of Partners in Policymaking, and her policy work at the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities, Kathryn stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Disability Rights Oregon's attorneys and advocates as we worked to transform our state together.

Through her work, Kathryn demonstrated her deep commitment to advocacy. For example, in *Staley v. Kitzhaber*, Kathryn tirelessly worked with Disability Rights Oregon toward a shared vision of services for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. For decades, adult Oregonians with developmental disabilities could receive long-term services only in an institutional setting such as the Fairview Training Center. People who requested community services were stuck on waitlists for years. Most were never transferred to community-based support.

Because of *Staley v. Kitzhaber*, Oregon began to build a new service system for all Oregonians who were eligible for intellectual and developmental disability services. The lawsuit grew to include more than 3,000 Oregonians as a class action lawsuit. In less than a year, the state settled the lawsuit. This litigation established the right of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to receive community-based services in lieu of institutionalization. The settlement created Oregon's Brokerage System that continues to serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities today. In a decade, the number of individuals signed up for community services went from zero to 7,000.

The National Council on Disability (NCD) has described Oregon as “a national leader in this field”, pointing to Oregon’s shuttering of institutions and rapid building of a statewide system of services as a model for other states. Oregon became a national leader in I/DD services thanks to the tireless work of Kathryn Weit and so many other parents and self-advocates who advocated to transform Oregon. Kathryn’s advocacy has positively impacted thousands of Oregonians and we will continue to build on the foundation she helped lay, that Oregonians experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities are valued members of our community who should have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of our community.

Disability Rights Oregon wholeheartedly supports SR 201.

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)

For more than 40 years, DRO has served as Oregon’s federally authorized and funded Protection & Advocacy System. DRO is committed to ensuring the civil rights of all people are protected and enforced, including youth in correctional settings.