



February 2, 2022

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

From: Emily Braman, Chair, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition and Past Chairs Katie Rose, Anna Keenan Mudrick and Jennifer Santiago

RE: Support for SR 201 Honoring Kathryn Weit's Legacy and Contributions to Oregonians with Developmental Disabilities and their Families and Communities

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The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of more than 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.

We owe our Coalition definition and values to Kathryn Weit. With her practical, forceful and visionary leadership, Kathryn brought a fractured advocacy community together under one voice because that's what families and self-advocates need to change systems and ensure they can live in their communities.

For over 30 years, Kathryn was in communities, bringing families together and helping provide a shared vision. Kathryn was instrumental in closing Fairview, our state institution and supporting people with disabilities to move back to their families and local communities across Oregon. She helped remove barriers to ensure that families could raise their children at home. Kathryn tore down systems that no longer worked for people with disabilities and families and then brought together the partners to build them back better.

Kathryn worked to ensure that the Coalition advocated with one voice around priority issues and worked with the same shared vision and values. Her strong advocacy was an example for leaders in every area. Kathryn was able to balance the reality of the state and systems and the importance of the services we provide. Kathryn had a unique ability to know what voice legislators needed to hear and advocacy to help them realize the policy point. She matched powerful stories of lived experience with policy and that came from having relationships with people with disabilities and families and knowing about their lives. Kathryn was the force you could never say no to. You always found the time and capacity to do what she needed to have done because you knew she needed your partnership.

Kathryn's gift for leadership development was unmatched. She taught us that developing leaders was a full-time job. We must consistently raise up the next generation of leaders to ensure the future of this work. She knew that the Coalition had to be a diverse group with diverse voices. The voices of self-advocates and families needed to be prominent within the Coalition and she worked hard to ensure that she developed those leaders from around the state. Kathryn knew who needed to be connected to each



issue and when she called, you answered. Kathryn, both mentored us and taught us how to mentor others. Through this she created a legacy of leaders who hold a responsibility to continue and raise up the next generation in the same value centered way. It will not be lost on families entering the system now the impact that Kathryn's work has had on their lives and their future - being able to have access to home and community services, being raised beside their siblings, working in community jobs, living in their own apartment. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude for the decades of work and the impact the Kathryn Weit has had on our system, our communities and statewide.