

Dear Senator Gelser Blouin,

Thank you for your response to Ms. Currans-Henry's email, and your interest in the process for hiring the new ODDS Director.

I apologize for not being available to testify in your committee next week. In lieu of an in-person testimony, I'm providing the following written update.

I plan to start the recruitment for the new ODDS Director after the 2025 session. To start the process now gets us very close to the long legislative session. Ms. Hittle's in-depth experience working in both OHA and ODHS, her deep understanding and familiarity with Medicaid considering her previous position as Oregon's Medicaid Director, and her reputation as a skilled administrator will help ODDS navigate through the long session with the agency facing challenging fiscal realities in the 25-27 biennium. In addition, I have asked Ms. Hittle to look at ODDS internal and external processes to identify improvements that can result in optimum efficiency and improving service to the population ODDS serves. My intent is to pass on a stable and highly functioning organization to the permanent ODDS Director.

When we launch the recruitment next year, we will follow a similar process as last year with plenty of opportunities for people with lived experience, advocates, providers, and legislators to provide input and help shape the recruitment process.

There are no plans, neither has there been any conversation about eliminating ODDS. ODDS has been, and will always remain as, an independent office focused on the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Ms. Hittle can speak during her testimony to any concerns regarding "a return to more 'institutional' values" or "shifting from centering the voices of people with ID/DD and their families/advocates in all policy choices to instead centering agencies and providers." These statements contradict our core values and our commitment to serve Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Once again, I appreciate your interest in the hiring process for the ODDS Director. I'm always a phone call or text/email away to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Fariborz Pakseresht  
Director  
Oregon Department of Human Services