

January 23, 2023

To: Senator Gelser Blouin, Chair - Senate Committee on Human Services, Vice Chair Robinson and Members of the Committee

Re: Senate Bill 420 – Support

I am a retired clinical speech-language pathologist having specialized in cognitive rehabilitation following brain injury. I have also served as Coordinator for Oregon's Governor's Task Force on Traumatic Brain Injury and am currently on the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA).

Whether serving as a clinician or board advocate, the hundreds of people I've been privileged to know living with brain injury or who are family members have taught me that our system of care and supports post-injury is deeply flawed in its lack of coordination.

My dear friend CS, who lived with significant physical and cognitive challenges following a severe brain injury, illustrates this vividly:

*“Working through my own struggles on a daily basis had brought into focus the unmet needs of others, and the complicated system that those with disabilities have to navigate in order to receive services and benefits. The process is not a clearly paved path with directions along the way. Rather it is a multi-level, complicated process that would challenge any non-injured person. Each attempt to receive help took repeated tries and many frustrating dead-ends before making traction in my endeavors. However, these experiences fueled the fire in me towards wanting to create change.”*

CS passed away last year. To honor her spirit and the thousands of other Oregonians living with brain injury seeking a more just, humane, and coordinated system of care post-injury, I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 420.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Ehlhardt Powell".

Laurie Ehlhardt Powell, PhD

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