

Senate Bill 420

Steve Paysinger, OTR/L Testimony January 23, 2023

Honorable Chair Senator Gelser-Blouin. Honorable Vice-Chair Senator Robinson and Honorable members of this committee.

In order to have credibility I'll provide you with my experience and understanding of the needs of the people we're discussing today.

I'm an Occupational Therapist specializing in brain injury rehabilitation for the past 38 years. My roles include Chair of the Oregon State Rehabilitation Council which is tasked under the ADA with providing Oregon's Vocational Rehabilitation Department insight in the consumer voice regarding their services. Past Board President of the Oregon Brain Injury Alliance, Co-Founder of the Salem Brain Injury Support Group and still facilitating part time after 33 years. Clinical Coordinator and developer of the Salem Health Brain Injury Day treatment program for 17 years. We were successful in 72% of our patients returning to work and independent living. A result of great therapy, community partnering and long-term resource facilitation. In 2021 I retired from Salem Health to start a non-profit, Minds In Motion Initiative of which I am the Executive Director. The initiative is to improve services for people with brain injuries in order for them to live the way they choose. In the past 6 months we've assisted close to 100 individuals in Marion and Polk County by connecting them with various resources and listening well to what their needs are.

A rhetorical question for you today. Who would you call if you or a family member had just been released from their rehabilitation program following a brain injury and you had no income as you can no longer work, and need ongoing rehabilitation services, behavioral supports, respite, vocational services, or assistance returning to school, transportation as you can no longer drive, and healthcare because you're no longer on the company plan, and on and on. Your ability to pay attention, remember, follow through, initiate are impaired because of brain damage. If you're like most people, you probably wouldn't know any of those types of resources existed. The way you live life now is forever changed. If you're relying on the medical model to assist you, it will not. This I know as I worked within the model for 38 years. Google is now your resource navigator. It's day 14 post discharge and you have not slept, the bills are piling up, you've spent most of your daytime hours waiting on hold for someone to give you useful information. They have not. Eventually you give up and become resilient in order to simply survive. This is what the Salem Brain Injury Support group participants told me at the Ike Box Coffee Shop this past Friday when I asked them what they wanted me to tell you today. "We're resilient!" My question back to them was why do you have to be so resilient? Their answer, "We're on our own".

It's a bit perplexing why the State of Oregon is one of the least friendly states in regards to assisting people with brain injuries. According to jail and prison studies 25-87% of inmates report having experienced a TBI as compared to 8.5% of the general population. The NIH reports 53% of all people living homeless have some form of brain injury. Over 20% of this population did not have a brain injury prior to becoming homeless. Would resource navigation for people with brain injuries prevent homelessness. It has for several people who have found us at Minds In Motion Initiative. Can we change? I believe an efficient and un-siloed system of resource navigation is a giant step in the right direction. Please make this bill a reality. It will save so many people from having to be resilient beyond our imagination. Thank-you for your time.