



Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage

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Regarding SB5520

Thank-you for allowing me to submit written testimony for SB5520. I am testifying in support of SB5520 declaring an emergency with the Long-term care ombudsmen and public guardian and conservator program(s). Eastern Oregon Support Services Brokerage (EOSSB) represents 477 individuals who experience Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) in 13 Eastern Oregon Counties. Our agency represents some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities who are often subject to abuse, neglect, exploited for financial gain, and who sometimes experience self-neglect which rises to the level of needing a public guardian.

The Oregon Public Guardian's office has provided invaluable assistance over the years in resolving multiple unique cases. In the most recent case, EOSSB involved the Oregon Public Guardian's office because a customer/person supported by EOSSB lost her mother and lost critical supports. Her mother had gone back to Mexico and ultimately passed away in Mexico, leaving her daughter in Oregon without needed supports. We engaged with OPG regarding this person's welfare and OPG stepped in to become the appointed guardian. This person has previously been sexually exploited, financially exploited, requires support to remain safe in the community, remembering to take medications, and requires a high level of support with decision making. OPG stepped in as a measure of last resort when it was clear that no other family was available to provide the support required. The individual now resides in a foster home with support, a job, friends, and an appointed guardian who assists her with making informed decisions.

In another case where EOSSB required support from the Oregon Public Guardian it was due to a parent who absconded from the State of Oregon with our customer, the protected person. This case required a very high level of involvement on OPG's part over the period of 10 months. The guardian of the protected person, pulled the person from school, was not properly administering seizure medications, and isolated the person from his community to his detriment. The guardian was financially dependent on the person's benefits and income earned from his care. Oregon Public Guardian worked with EOSSB, the court in Oregon where guardianship was first appointed to the parent/guardian, the State of Oregon Office of Developmental Disability services, another state's court system, law enforcement in the other state, law enforcement in Oregon, other family members in Oregon, potential foster providers in Oregon, a transportation company that would transport the protected person back to Oregon, and other various community partners. Oregon Public Guardian sent a public deputy to the other state at their own expense to provide direct support to the protected person to get him back here safely. If not for Oregon Public Guardian's advocacy and dogged

determination we would never have successfully been able to intercede on behalf of this person, who now resides in a foster home in Oregon and is living life to the fullest potential.

The last case involved another person whose legal guardian, a family member, removed him from his chosen foster home placement. The appointed guardian was unaware of how to care for the protected person, made decisions that were detrimental to him, isolated him, and did not adequately address health, safety, and disability related needs. This resulted in injuries requiring on-going medical treatment, involvement of law enforcement, and involvement of protective services. The guardian was financially dependent on the person's benefits and income earned from his care. Oregon Public Guardian was invaluable in coordinating with the assigned Oregon court, EOSSB, the Office of Developmental Disability Services, other appointed legal counsel, and another Case Management agency that was involved to successfully advocate for the termination of the appointed guardian and the appointment of Oregon Public Guardian as the temporary guardian until the final determination could be made. The protected person has been returned, per his choice, to his previous foster home, where he is thriving.

Oregon Public Guardian only becomes involved in situations where there is significant risk to the person's health and safety, where no other viable alternative for guardianship exists, and only when it's been shown the person is not able to act for themselves. Oregon Public Guardianship maintains a very high threshold that needs to be met prior to their involvement. As illustrated in the above cases when OPG gets involved it requires a very high level of involvement and coordination across multiple entities to create positive outcomes. Case Management Entities throughout the state need a resource to access in dire situations when someone's health and safety is at risk. Currently Oregon Public Guardian has reached their capacity and they are unable to take on additional cases. They need additional funds to provide the level of coordination, staffing, and legal advocacy it takes to deal with these very complicated situations.

As a Case Management entity, we often have no resources to turn to when someone is in immediate danger, please consider additional emergency funding that allows Oregon Public Guardianship to assist in situations where people who experience ID/DD are at imminent risk. We often represent Oregon's most vulnerable people, and we need resources to effectively address situations that require the intervention of Oregon's public guardian.

I humbly thank-you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of HB5520.

Laura Noppenberger

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