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I am writing in support of HB 2869 which would advance a much-needed Multi-Sector Comprehensive Plan for Aging and Disability.

I am a longtime healthcare and public health professional in Oregon, including:

- membership in the original Health Services Commission which helped to launch the Oregon Health Plan
- 25+ years as a family physician, medical director, interim executive director and Board member of One Community Health in Hood River and The Dalles
- 12 years as Health Officer for Hood River County
- Over a decade as Medical Director for Hospice of the Gorge
- Several years as a national consultant to HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care
- Board member and Trustee of the American Hospital Association, the Northwest Health Foundation, and Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
- ...and most relevantly, founder of the Aging in the Gorge Alliance, an all-volunteer advocacy organization for older adults and their caregivers, in the Mid-Columbia.

I mention these roles because in all of them I have witnessed a widening gap in attention to the health, educational, workforce, and social service needs of older adults and people living with disabilities.

We have numerous agencies and initiatives that focus "on children and families" but rarely do they include elders in "families" nor do they attend to the fast-growing population of family caregivers. Children, teens, young and middle-aged adults are currently providing skilled and vital care to older family members, usually without compensation and with inadequate recognition of the toll this takes on their own educational achievements, opportunities for job advancement, productivity, housing, and personal health.

You are no doubt already familiar with the age demographics in Oregon. They are astonishing. Layered on the percentage of our neighbors above the age of 65, or 85, is the percentage of them living with one or more disabilities. Make no mistake – older adults and people living with disabilities are also an overlooked *asset* in our new world. Supporting them in the workforce, deploying them more widely as volunteers, and ensuring that they have secure housing and services in order to thrive – all are essential.

“Multi-sector” is absolutely on target for a comprehensive plan. We need to make rapid, wise and equitable changes in education, workforce support, vocational training, healthcare (medical, oral, behavioral), public health, insurance, infrastructure, housing, transportation. We cannot accomplish what is required without professional synthesis of currently disparate, silo’d findings; focused identification of assets and unmet needs; and a commitment to creative and sustained problem-solving.

Please pass this bill. It will help set Oregon on our way to comprehensive planning for the changing world, in which one out of every five us is over 65 and one of every five workers is also serving as a caregiver each day when they arrive home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Castañares". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tina Castañares, MD