



**TO:** Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, Members of Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services  
**FROM:** Emily Cooper, Legal Director, Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)  
**DATE:** March 14, 2023

**RE:** DRO 's Testimony in Support of SB 5525

Dear Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services,

Disability Rights Oregon submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 5525 supporting the Oregon Health Authority's budget.

For years, we have underfunded home and community-based services to children and adults with disabilities resulting in both gross health care inequities and forcing us into institutions ranging from jails, the state hospital, or even out-of-state locked facilities. In 2021, the Oregon State Legislature reversed course and provided unprecedented funding to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to reinvest back into communities. SB 5525 is OHA's continued commitment to better serve Oregonians. There are many promising aspects of OHA's budget but I will draw your attention to three.

First, expansion of EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Services) will be a game changer for Medicaid eligible youth. This federal law is a commitment to all eligible children and mandates that each child receive all medically necessary services to both meet their needs and maximize their success as adults. This is an investment in our children and the future.

Second, we firmly support OHA's efforts to use 1115 waiver funds to provide case management, supported housing, personal care services, mobile crisis and other critical behavioral health supports. If invested correctly, these services will help support many marginalized communities including 1) individuals transitioning out of Oregon State Hospital and jails across our state, 2) houseless individuals who face multiple barriers to remain housed, and will ultimately 3) disrupt the vicious cycle of relying on the criminal justice system to address behaviors related to unmet behavioral health needs.

Third and finally, Disability Rights Oregon supports the continued funding for aid and assist services including establishing community navigators, expanding jail diversion services to all counties, enhancing intensive services, and ensuring community restoration is a safe and reliable resource for all Oregonians no matter which county you live in or what resources have been available in the past.

#### Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)

For more than 40 years, DRO has served as Oregon's federally authorized Protection & Advocacy System. DRO is committed to ensuring the civil rights of all with disabilities, including those charged with crimes and waiting for court ordered mental health services.