



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Residential Facilities Ombudsman Program

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To: Senator Gelsler Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Toni Larson, Residential Facilities Ombudsman
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health

RE: Support for SB 1522

Introduction

Esteemed members of the legislative committee. Thank you for consideration of my written testimony in support of SB 1522. The RFO program is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life, care, and rights of individuals residing in over 2,700 adult and child foster homes, 24-hour group homes, Residential Treatment Homes, and Residential Treatment Facilities licensed for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or Mental Health in Oregon. Through complaint investigation and resolution, education, advocacy, and system-wide recommendations, we strive to support the rights of residents.

Support for SB 1522

Over the past several months, we have actively participated in the workgroup discussions surrounding SB 1522 and fully endorse the many points and testimony brought forward in support of this crucial bill. Our experience has shown that individuals under civil commitment in residential settings that RFO serves often face undue violations of their rights, solely because they are under civil commitment. Such violations include, but are not limited to, restrictions on their choice of residence, visitors, food/diet, pursuing education, and participation in community activities.

The Need for Change

The current system of residential care under Developmental Disabilities (DD) in Oregon does not include institutional settings. It is designed as a holistic, home and community-based system of care that prioritizes individual choice and the availability of services.

Within this system, service providers cannot restrict an individual's freedom to leave or compel them to accept undesired services and supports. Residents in Oregon have the fundamental right to choose their living arrangements and be the central creator in the design of their lives and supports.

This approach aligns with our state's values of dignity, independence, and personal choice. However, the practice of civil commitment based on Intellectual Disability, as it currently stands, undermines these principles by imposing unnecessary restrictions on individuals to a place that does not exist and a system that does not offer the service of involuntary placement.

Our Position

Based on our experience and requests for assistance we receive from individuals we strongly support the passage of SB 1522. Removal of the option of Civil Commitment based on Intellectual disability does not change services and supports available to the current 19 individuals. This bill represents a significant step forward in ensuring that all residents are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. It addresses systemic issues that have long affected the rights and quality of life of individuals in residential care settings.

Conclusion

We urge the committee to consider the importance of SB 1522 and its potential to positively impact the lives of countless individuals across Oregon. By supporting the passage of this bill, we can collectively move towards a more inclusive, respectful, and just system of care for all residents.

Thank you