



February 12, 2024

To: Chair Jama and Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Leslie Sutton, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: Support for SB 1530 Rent assistance and Healthy Homes

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 40 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equity and community integration for Oregonians with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families. Our members include a statewide coalition of people with DD, peer-based family support organizations, support services brokerages, advocacy organizations and DD providers.

Support Increase for Healthy Homes Program

All people deserve a safe, accessible, affordable place to call home. Medicaid funding can be used to pay for disability related renovations to a home, such as a ramp, a roll in shower, or other modifications to a home that will allow someone more independence in their day-to-day activities. However, this funding is limited to the specific disability related modification. The funding does not allow for 'repairs' of an individual's home.

Thus, if dry rot, for example, is found during a phase of the modification, all work must stop until the "repair" can be completed. Many of the individuals with DD live on a very low income. Often the only money is what they receive from Social Security. As such, the "repair" cost is not something they will ever be able to afford. Too often the result is the person does not get the disability related adaptation that is needed.

These have real impacts on people. In 2021, we supported the Healthy Homes initial investments. At that time, we offered the following example of an individual who was left with a hole in the roof of his family home because dry rot was discovered while taking down an old awning from a previous ramp. The original ramp was in such disrepair that we were fearful it would collapse under the weight of the person's chair. Thus, the repair was an urgent need. The family waited several months until our agency agreed to pay the contractor to do the necessary work to then again resume the work on the ramp. This expense is not something we could do for everyone we serve which is why we are urging you to support this bill.

We support SB 1530 adding additional funds to the Healthy Homes program, and also urge that



there be strong connections between the program and developmental disability services to ensure repair dollars make it to Oregonians with DD so they can live in the safe, affordable and accessible homes they deserve.

Support Rent Assistance

For people experiencing disabilities and their families, home means a stable, appropriate and affordable place where they can have supports to live and work as valued members of Oregon communities. When they cannot find housing, their supports are jeopardized or interrupted. Without supports, their ability to be community members is destabilized. When people lose or delay their supports, they risk losing their jobs, relationships and community connections – which are the major aspects of being a community member.

Further, for many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, when they cannot find affordable, appropriate or safe housing, they are forced to explore more expensive living arrangements like group homes or foster homes.

Two of our members have previously held focus groups around Oregon to hear from the intellectual and developmental disabilities community about what home means to them. The preliminary results are striking: housing stability matters. Affordability matters, but is out of reach without rent assistance. The ability to continue to live where you are successful matters.

Our members heard from self-advocates and families that finding the right housing that is appropriate, decent and affordable is a major reason that self-advocates are able to work and live as valued community members. Our members also saw the extreme stress and feeling of powerlessness when people talked about having a home that worked for them, but feeling it was under threat constantly by lack of rental assistance.

Oregon has a long history of supporting people experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities to be community members, living and working alongside their neighbors.

Now, Oregon has the opportunity to pass SB 1530 and provide the opportunity through rent assistance and increases to the Healthy Homes program for safe, affordable and appropriate housing to support thousands of its citizens experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. We hear the urgency from our communities across Oregon – there is no time to wait.