



January 29, 2025

Chair Gelser-Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amber Myre, and I serve as the Executive Director of Living Opportunities, an organization dedicated to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in achieving fulfilling lives within our community. I am writing today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 810, a legislative measure that I had the privilege to contribute to during its development.

In 2012, the landmark case *Lane v. Brown* challenged the State of Oregon's practice of segregating individuals with I/DD in sheltered workshops, where they often performed menial tasks for subminimum wages, isolated from the broader community. The resulting settlement in 2015 mandated significant changes, including the provision of supported employment services to enable individuals to secure competitive, integrated employment opportunities.

Since then, Oregon has made commendable progress in shifting from sheltered workshops to inclusive employment settings. However, the work continues. Senate Bill 810 is a critical step in continuing this trajectory. The bill directs the Department of Human Services to collaborate with the Department of Education to enhance opportunities for individuals with I/DD to obtain and advance in competitive integrated employment.

By enacting SB 810, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles established in the *Lane v. Brown* settlement and take proactive measures to prevent any regression into outdated practices. This legislation not only aligns with our legal obligations but also reflects our collective moral duty to uphold the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities.

At Living Opportunities, we have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that meaningful employment has on the lives of individuals with I/DD. Gainful employment fosters independence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. It allows individuals to contribute their talents to our community, enriching the diversity and vitality of our workforce.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 810 to ensure that Oregon remains a leader in promoting inclusive employment practices. Let us continue to build a future where all individuals, regardless of ability, have the opportunity to thrive in integrated work environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amber Myre

Executive Director, Living Opportunities