



February 4, 2025

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RE: Testimony to Senate Committee on Energy and the Environment on Senate
Bill 550 (Neutral)

To Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. Everyone deserves to live independently and participate fully in society. However, barriers to repairing assistive technology like electronic wheelchairs and complex rehabilitation technology prevents inclusion in the community.

The story of Kelsey Hargroves underscores the importance of SB 550 and its companion bill SB 549. In her separate video testimony,¹ she emphasized how her electronic wheelchair allows her greater independence, social connections, and access to employment. She loves working at Burger King. However, authorization processes with respect to repairing her wheelchair led her to have to go without her chair for six months. During that time, she lost independence, had difficulty accessing her friend network, and could not work the job she loves.

It should have been a simple process to get her a new battery. In fact, in oral testimony on Senate Bill 549, one repair specialist noted that without the prior authorization processes through Medicaid, a repair like the one Kelsey needed

¹ Kelsey's testimony is available through the Oregon Legislative Information System here:
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/120446>



most likely could be performed on the spot with a replacement battery right off the repair truck. The cause of her delays had to do with poor policies regarding both insurance coverage and how to qualify for a replacement chair that most likely would have been avoided if SB 549/550 were in effect.²

Kelsey is not alone in facing obstacles such as these. Senate Bills 549 and 550 simplify the process to obtain common repairs. Individuals will not have to seek prior authorization from a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) to cover the cost of repairs. Under SB 550 users of assistive technologies will also have improved access to necessary resources, because it requires manufacturers to provide access to proprietary parts, embedded software, and essential documentation to conduct repairs via an independent repair provider.

Both SB 549 and SB 550 work in concert to reduce the delays and help manage the costs and other difficulties of repairing assistive technology. They will have a positive impact for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities—many of whom rely on assistive technology.

Improving access to repairs also promises better health and safety for users of the technologies. It improves health and safety because unrepaired equipment may lead to injuries or medical complications. For example, being confined to a bed or to a temporary wheelchair that is not custom fitted to the individual raises the risk of pressure sores. Others may be at greater risk of falling and that could even cause injury to others—such as caregivers or other natural supports.

In short, these two bills will improve the safety, health, quality of life, and autonomy of people with disabilities by improving access to assistive technology repairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 549 and 550.

² One of the issues in Kelsey’s case that led to such a long period without a chair is that the family was told that, if they performed the battery repair themselves, she would have to wait an additional five years for a replacement chair. She was only six months away from obtaining a new chair, so the difficult decision was made to wait. We believe that by prohibiting prior authorization requirements (SB 549) and facilitating access to third party repairs (SB 550), she would never have been placed in the situation to choose between either a simple repair or having to wait five more years for a new chair.