

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Kasi Dunning, and I am the Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD) Program Manager at Columbia Community Mental Health serving Columbia County. One of the primary responsibilities of my organization is to provide case management services to individuals who experience an Intellectual or Developmental Disability.

Case managers for an individual with an I/DD are a lifeline - they help connect people to vital services like housing, healthcare, and transportation. And in the event of an emergency, case managers ensure individuals are able to evacuate and find a safe place to go.

Our programs are funded through the Oregon Department of Human Services. Over the past few years, our funding level has remained flat at roughly 86% of what would be considered full funding. Our service coordinators are managing unmanageable caseloads, working long hours with little to no breaks. This has shifted their roles from proactive to reactive, compromising the quality of care. The high rate of staff burnout has resulted in a high turnover rate, disrupting services and person-centered care. The loss of seasoned staff, who hold valuable historical knowledge and insight, further exacerbates the situation as new staff lack mentorship and guidance.

A manageable caseload is crucial for the wellbeing of the individuals in our program. Adequate funding directly impacts all aspects of our program, from intake and case planning to the overall wellbeing of the people we serve. Without sufficient funding, we cannot provide the best quality of care and support that our clients deserve.

Additional resources will enable us to reduce caseloads, support our staff, and ensure that we can continue to provide high-quality, person-centered care.

We are partnering with the Support Service Brokerages this session to restore these programs to 100% of full funding. Such investment would draw down significant federal match and will help solve many of the staffing issues that our programs are experiencing across the state.

We urge you to support this request!

Sincerely,
Kast Dunning
I/DD Program Director
Columbia County