

Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities

"[The state shall] ...assure that older citizens and citizens with disabilities retain the right of free choice in planning and managing their lives; by increasing the number of options in life styles available to older citizens and citizens with disabilities; by aiding older citizens and citizens with disabilities to help themselves; by strengthening the natural support system of family, friends and neighbors to further self-care and independent living; and by encouraging all programs that seek to maximize self-care and independent living within the mainstream of life." ORS 410.020

INDEPENDENCE • CHOICE • DIGNITY

AARP Oregon
Advocacy Coalition of Seniors
and People with Disabilities
Brain Injury Association of Oregon
Governor's Commission
on Senior Services
Elders in Action Commission
Multnomah County Disability Services
Advisory Council
O4AD (Oregon Association of Area
Agencies on Aging and Disabilities)
Central Oregon Council on Aging
Clackamas County Social Services
Community Action Program East
Central Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Connection
of Northeast Oregon
Douglas County Senior &
Disability Services
Grant County Seniors
Harney County Senior &
Community Services Center
Klamath Basin Senior Citizens
Council
Lake County Seniors
Lane Council of Governments
– Senior and Disabled Services
Malheur Council on Aging
Mid-Columbia Council
of Governments
Multnomah County
Aging & Disability Services
NorthWest Senior & Disability Services
Oregon Cascades West
Council of Governments
– Senior & Disability Services
Rogue Valley Council of Governments
– Senior & Disabled Services
South Coast Business Employment
Corp. Area Agency on Aging
Washington County Department of
Disability, Aging & Veteran Services
Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans
Oregon Alliance of Senior and
Health Services
Oregon Health Care Association
Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens
Parkinson's Resources of Oregon
Save Oregon Seniors
Service Employees International Union
United Seniors of Oregon



Oregon's Long-Term Care System — A Responsive, Innovative History in Jeopardy

Oregon is home to a system of long-term care that has been held up as the model for the country. Advocates and policy makers cooperatively created this system in the 1970s and 80s, putting a groundbreaking focus on providing care where seniors and those with disabilities wanted it: in their homes and communities, significantly reducing the proportion of individuals in institutional settings like nursing homes. Even more revolutionary was that this system was codified in state law promising "independence, choice and dignity" and it saved significant taxpayer dollars.

However, decades of neglect and disinvestment have weakened this system. The current economic crisis demands that we act now and reverse this trend. The combined economic and human impacts from drastic cuts or inaction are simply too great. Oregon's home- and community-based system is an economic engine that leverages major federal funding, according to a recent ECONorthwest study. And Oregon's 65+ population is expected to more than double in less than 20 years, comprising nearly one in five Oregonians and signaling impending strain on a system that's crumbling. More than ever, fulfilling the promise of providing independence, choice and dignity is the right thing to do. And it remains the fiscally responsible, cost-effective thing to do, especially now.

Coming
Feb. 23!

*A way to learn
more, connect and
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www.oregonspromise.org

Preserving, Fixing and then Reinvesting in Oregon's Long-Term System

We know that Oregon's long-term care system IS the right system. It's a system designed to honor the independence, choice and dignity of seniors and people with disabilities by allowing home and community-based alternatives. And it's a system that is highly cost-efficient and fiscally responsible that saves taxpayer dollars and leverages major federal funding. However, it's in deep jeopardy and faces drastic cuts that Oregon's most vulnerable, its communities and economy just can't afford.



We must first preserve what we have and know works well. Then, fix the things that will help strengthen the system and ensure quality care. And we must invest in efforts that enable us to expand access and supports, including information, early intervention and prevention. These steps include:

Maximizing Medicaid Access for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Oregon's long-term care providers are constantly battling costs that greatly outweigh the Medicaid reimbursement they receive for providing services to Oregon's low-income frail and elderly. At the same time, budget cuts and significant new restrictions and criteria have limited the ability of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens to access the Medicaid system. Historically, Oregon's long-term care model has provided an array of community-based options for services, but with the ever-rising cost of providing those services and the lack of funding for case management and enrollment staff, Oregon's once-lauded community-based care foundation is in danger of crumbling. Despite demonstrable increases in need, Oregon actually serves fewer clients than it did in past years. In order to stabilize the system and ensure access to services for Oregon's seniors and people with disabilities, the Legislature can:

- Reinvest in fair, sustainable reimbursement for Oregon's long-term care providers.
- Preserve and ultimately expand eligibility criteria to maximize available federal dollars.
- Provide adequate resources to Oregon's case managers so they can function more efficiently to help more of our vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities access services.

Ensuring Quality Care by Recruiting and Training a Qualified, Stable Workforce and Investing in Family Caregiver Supports

Oregon's long-term care workforce shortage is expected to exacerbate the effect of an increasing population of seniors and people with disabilities over the next two decades. To best prepare for the "boom" and ensure quality of care and service, Oregon needs to make critical investments in its long-term care workforce development and family caregivers at all levels, including:

- Provide adequate training, compensation and benefits for Oregon's long-term care workers.
- Continue investment in increased nursing facility staffing.
- Cover full-reimbursement of nurse-aid training costs.
- Create a quality-care fund, funded by license fees and civil monetary penalties currently lost to the greater general fund.
- Provide respite programs and other resources to family caregivers who offer unpaid care for their loved ones at a great benefit to the state.

Strengthening Oregon's Aging and Disability Resource Infrastructure

For many vulnerable Oregonians unable to qualify for Medicaid assistance but without enough resources to purchase private care, the web of available supportive services is scarce and confusing - limiting access, despite evidence that early intervention dramatically reduces the likelihood that they will need more costly services in the future. Often, the only option left is for individuals to prematurely spend-down their assets and enter a more restrictive and costly care setting far before it is necessary - at a significant cost to the state and Oregon taxpayers. Suggested effective legislative fixes include:

- Fund programs like Oregon Project Independence and volunteer programs to allow more Oregonians to live independently and contribute to their communities.
- Invest in community supports, including affordable housing, special needs transportation, mental health and addiction services, and the establishment of the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) to help ensure more livable communities and connect vulnerable Oregonians to available services while using state dollars more efficiently to serve those in need.

About Us

We're an alliance of diverse organizations representing business, labor, consumers and other concerned Oregonians working together to help policy makers realize the tremendous long-term care system Oregon has and the ways to preserve and strengthen it. We believe the time is now to protect, renew and reinvest in this visionary, efficient and cost-saving system and promise for seniors and people with disabilities to age with independence, choice and dignity.

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