

Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities

I N D E P E N D E N C E • C H O I C E • D I G N I T Y

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

Save Oregon Seniors

Service Employees International Union

United Seniors of Oregon

June 11, 2008

Dear Chair Morrisette, Chair Cowan and esteemed committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to collectively discuss Oregon's long-term care system with you today. This conversation actually began 30 years ago with the birth of a groundbreaking system and a promise to provide independence, choice and dignity to Oregon seniors and people with disabilities through Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) Chapter 410. Our hope is that your work in the 2009 legislative session will renew this promise and strengthen our system for another 30 years.

First Steps Forward

We commend the committee for its work in championing Senate Bill 1061 this past supplemental legislative session. The legislation will be instrumental in beginning to address the pressing needs of Oregon's long-term care system.

And we thank the Department of Human Services and the staff of the Seniors and People with Disabilities Division for its efforts to date in drafting elements of the long-range, comprehensive plan for this system called for in SB 1061.

There is no question this is a monumental task. We are fortunate to be working with legislative and policy leaders who appreciate the importance and value of the moment we're in and the opportunity we have.

We enter this process in far better shape than most states. Oregon's long-term care system IS the right system. However, years of disinvestment have carved away critical services from some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens, compromising our system's foundation and core values.

Right System at the Right Price

The promise Oregon made to its seniors and people with disabilities nearly three decades ago created an innovative model for the nation. That promise was to provide a long-term care system of home- and community-based services founded on offering independence, choice and dignity. It was also predicated on common sense. It saves the state and Oregon taxpayers significant dollars and leverages major federal funding.

The Time is Now

Neglect and disinvestment have plagued Oregon's long-term care system for the past two decades. We now lack the funding or infrastructure to deal with

(More)

current needs, let alone anticipated growth. With Oregon's 65+ population expected to more than double in less than 20 years, this situation becomes even more urgent.

Core Tenets

Our organizations strongly believe that any plan for the future of Oregon's long-term care system must first focus on strengthening the system's foundation.

Three primary areas will help ensure a strong foundation on which to build:

- Maximizing access by investing in sustainable reimbursement of long-term care providers; expanding eligibility criteria; and providing adequate resources and meeting workload staffing needs of the state's Area Agencies on Aging & Disabilities.
- Strengthening the overall aging and disability resource infrastructure by: helping seniors and people with disabilities and their families navigate services; supporting programs that help moderate and low-income individuals access services and supports that delay entrance into Medicaid, including Oregon Project Independence; fortifying volunteer-based programs; and expanding mental health and addictions services, affordable housing and special needs transportation.
- Ensuring quality care by recruiting and training a stable, qualified workforce.

Thank you again for your leadership thus far. We look forward to working with you to reaffirm Oregon's promise to its seniors and people with disabilities of protecting independence, dignity and choice – not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's the fiscally responsible and cost-effective right thing to do.

Sincerely,



Jerry Cohen, State Director
AARP Oregon



Bill Olson, Co-Chair
Advocacy Coalition of Seniors
& People with Disabilities



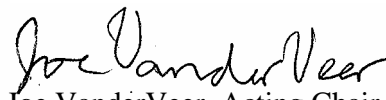
Frank E. Bocci Jr, President
Brain Injury Association of Oregon



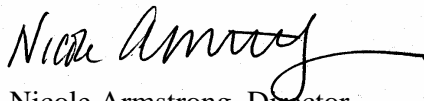
John Helm, Chair
Governor's Commission
on Senior Services



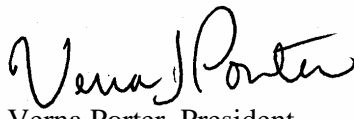
Betty Brislaw, Chair
Elders in Action Commission



Joe VanderVeer, Acting Chair
Multnomah Co. Disability
Services Advisory Council



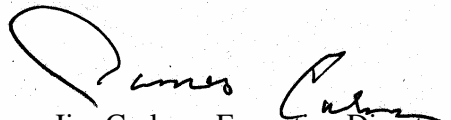
Nicole Armstrong, Director
O4AD (Oregon Association
of Area Agencies & Disabilities)



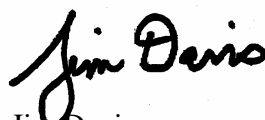
Verna Porter, President
Oregon Alliance for Retired
Americans



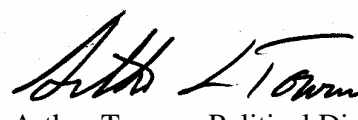
Ruth Gulyas, Executive Director
Oregon Alliance of Senior
and Health Services



Jim Carlson, Executive Director
Oregon Health Care Association



Jim Davis
Oregon State Council for
Retired Citizens; Save Oregon
Seniors; United Seniors of Oregon



Arthur Towers, Political Director
SEIU (Service Employees
International Union)