

Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities

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

Save Oregon Seniors

Service Employees International Union

United Seniors of Oregon

Feb. 10, 2009

Dear Co-Chairs Carter and Buckley and esteemed Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to 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. It's also a system in tremendous jeopardy.

The Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities

Let me first explain who and what the Campaign for Oregon's Seniors and People with Disabilities is. We're a diverse alliance of senior and disability organizations representing business, consumers, labor and other concerned Oregonians who've come together to help showcase the tremendous model of home and community-based care services that Oregon is home to. We believe we must protect and invest in this efficient and cost-saving system and ensure we fulfill the promise of ORS 410. We also believe that the economic crisis facing you and our state demands that we act now. The combined economic and human impacts from drastic cuts or inaction are simply too great.

Oregon's Long-Term Care System Provides Critical Economic Stimulus

Oregon's home- and community-based system is an economic engine. It also saves the state and Oregon taxpayers significant dollars while leveraging major federal funding. A recent study by independent economic consulting firm ECONorthwest helps illustrate this. Long-term care programs for Oregon's vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities are part of Medicaid, which means for every \$1 the state allocates, the federal government matches with about \$1.70. That's the kind of return on investment our economy and communities need. ECONorthwest recently evaluated the economic impacts of those federal dollars and found that *every* \$1 million in state funding for long-term care creates an average of 30 jobs and \$1.7 million in economic activity. Ultimately, proposed cuts to services for seniors and people with disabilities are projected to lead to more than 10,000 *lost* long-term care jobs and \$587 million *lost* in related economic activity. With Oregon's unemployment rate headed for double digit levels, our economy and communities just can't afford this.

Doing the Right Thing at the Right Price

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 our seniors

and people with disabilities by allowing home and community-based alternatives to more restrictive, more expensive nursing homes. It's a system that's the envy of the nation and other states try to adopt. And it's a system that is highly cost-efficient and fiscally responsible that saves taxpayer dollars and leverages major federal funding.

Years of disinvestment have already carved away critical services and compromised our system's foundation and core values. We must not move Oregon even further backward, creating unintended consequences that ultimately cost far more.

In closing, please know that we understand our state is facing extremely challenging economic times that will require tough choices of policy makers and advocates alike. But we urge you take a long, hard look at what Oregon's home- and community-based care system brings and means to vulnerable Oregonians as well as to our state's workers, communities, and economy.

Thank you for your time, leadership and service. We stand ready to work with you.

Rick Bennett, AARP Oregon Director of Government Relations, on behalf of the Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities.