



House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 2956 (amendments)**

Andrea Meyer, Director of Government Relations

April 1, 2025

AARP is dedicated to empowering Americans 50+ to choose how they live as they age. Here in Oregon we advocate for close to 500,000 members with a broad focus on health security, financial resilience and livable communities and very specifically around older Oregonians receiving long term services and supports.

We are here today to express our opposition to HB 2956 -2 Amendments which would establish a pilot project to allow up to 7 residents in an adult foster home, which currently is limited to no more than 5 residents. AARP does not come lightly to this decision but we have been *consistent* in raising objections since this proposal was first brought forward as a pilot project in 2019 (HB 2570) and more recently in 2024 (SB 1591) that would have amended the law. In both cases, AARP testified in *opposition* to the bills and we must do so here again, today.

One thing I think all of us agree on is that the adult foster home reimbursement and payment structure rate is wholly outdated. That's why *when* AARP testified against SB 1591 in the 2024 session, we committed to supporting efforts in 2025 to update the payment methodology. And we are doing that.

On February 11, I testified before this committee in support of HB 2560, which updates the adult foster home payment structure and at the same time, I noted our continued opposition to efforts to expand the number of residents in adult foster home settings. Joining us to support HB 2560 were the Hospital Association, Providence St. Vincent and SEIU, along with two adult foster home operators but surprisingly, there was no testimony by the Independent Adult Care Home Association.

One of the key strengths of adult foster homes is the emphasis on providing a home-like environment for serving five or fewer older individuals or younger adults with disabilities. It is critical that all residents have autonomy, privacy, adequate individual and shared space (sufficient for *all* members of the household) along with all the necessary health and safety protections. Entities that serve more residents have increased licensing and regulatory requirements.

AARP does not support expanding the number of residents *even* in a pilot because it fundamentally changes nature of the home-like setting for care that residents can expect to receive and it does so *without* considering, updating and adopting new statutory or regulatory health, safety, and licensing requirements.

As just two examples around safety. Currently, the administrative rules require that in an emergency all occupants of an adult foster home must be evacuated to the initial safety point **within three minutes or less**, with direct access to a public sidewalk or street and with the final safety point, in an additional **two or less minutes** (OAR 411-050-0725 (3)(b)). We know from a recent APD study that increasingly, the residents in adult foster homes have high complex medical needs. In addition to the medical needs, as individuals age, they often encounter decreased mobility. These are all considerations when thinking about evacuating 5 residents, along with family members, if tragedy strikes. Needless to say, AARP is very concerned about full compliance with the *current* evacuation requirements when it comes to “only” 5 residents.

In addition, SB 1066 which is waiting for a vote on the Senate would make permanent in law that adult foster homes do *not* need to install sprinklers if they are serving the current legal limit of 5 or fewer residents. While unclear what this would do if there were facilities serving more residents under this pilot, this is just one example of serious safety issues that we must grapple with prior to expanding either through pilot or in permanent law, the number of residents in an adult foster home in Oregon.

We need to recognize that today, an adult foster home may have 7, 8, 9 or more occupants, which includes caregivers and children, creating a wonderful multi-generational home. But if we want to increase the number of residents beyond that, we have to take into account the physical size of the home, including shared space, the number of bedrooms, the number of bathrooms, the number of caregivers, any staff training and licensing requirements, the fire and safety protections including sprinklers and emergency-exit requirements and so on.

While we appreciate that the proponents of HB 2956 want to test out the model with evaluation, we think even in a pilot, this skips a critical conversation that we need to have and ultimately protections that need to be put in place. We are talking about some of our most vulnerable Oregonians and any change, even temporary or limited, to the protections we have put in place should not be done without understanding the short and long term implications on residents not just in adult foster homes but in all our community based settings.

**We need a workgroup with all stakeholders discussing all elements of this issue, including what has to be put in place before we contemplate expanding the current model of home-like resident-centered care in Oregon. While we stand ready to engage in looking at how we can address the needs of a growing population of older Oregonians and how they can best be served in a variety of settings we urge this committee not to proceed with this bill.**