



February 10, 2021

To: Representative Fahey, Chair, House Committee on Housing

From: Jennifer Santiago, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: Support for HB2842, Healthy Homes.

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Chair Fahey and Members of the House Committee on Housing:

My name is Jennifer Santiago and I am representing the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition which represents 40 organizations that work to create equitable supports for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I am also the Executive Director of a Support Services Brokerage in the metro area doing case management work for 475 adults with IDD living in the community in their own or family homes.

I am here to urge your support of HB 2842 with the -3 amendments. This bill will do a lot to further the use of Medicaid dollars that are utilized for disability related supports. Medicaid funding can be used to pay for disability related renovations to a home, such as a ramp, a roll in shower, or other modifications to a home that will allow someone more independence in their day to day activities. However, this funding is limited to the specific disability related modification. The funding does not allow for ‘repairs’ of an individual’s home. Thus, if dry rot, for example, is found during a phase of the modification, all work must stop until the “repair” can be completed. Many of the individuals we are working with live on a very modest income. Often the only money is what they receive from Social Security. As such, the “repair” cost is not something they will ever be able to afford. Too often the result is the person does not get the disability related adaptation that is needed.

In my history I have seen injuries to workers or family members when an adjustment to a bathtub or shower is not possible. I’ve seen people wait years for a simple grab bar to be installed in a bathroom because a scope of work was needed to ensure “repairs” would not be needed prior to starting the work. The worst case was an individual who was left with a hole in the roof of his family home because dry rot was discovered while taking down an old awning from a previous ramp. The original ramp was in such disrepair that we were fearful it would collapse under the weight of the person’s chair. Thus, the repair was an urgent need. The family waited several months until our agency agreed to pay the contractor to do the necessary work to then again resume the work on the ramp. This expense is not something we could do for everyone we serve which is why we are urging you to support this bill.

We need the kind of creative thinking HB 2842 brings to help bridge the gap in funding and services. We appreciate expertise from the developmental disability community that is added to the task force in the -3 amendments. Keeping people in their own homes as long as possible is not only humane, it is also a savings to the cost of care.

Thank you for your time and attention.



Oregon DD  
Coalition

Advancing Opportunities

Sincerely,

Jennifer Santiago  
Executive Director- Community Pathways, Inc.  
Member Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition