

Submitter: Jim Davis
On Behalf Of: Or St Cn for Retired Citizens United Srs of OR
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2956

Opposition to HB 2956-2, Increasing Maximum Residents in Adult Foster Homes, House Human Services Committee, April 1, 2025

I am Dr. Jim Davis, representing the Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens and United Seniors of Oregon, state affiliates of the National Council on Aging. We want to express our opposition to HB 2956 with the addition of the -2 amendment from Senator Meek, which would create a pilot project aimed at removing the current Adult Foster Home (AFH) resident limit of five and allow for an increase to seven residents to reside in adult foster homes. Even though this establishes only a pilot project and has added more safeguards around staffing and room occupancy, we still feel this is a backdoor attempt to create an irresponsible policy for AFH residents.

Senior and disability advocates have been opposing this type of legislation for decades, including the past 6 years with the numerous legislative attempts by Senator Meek and the AFH industry. We understand that there are financial concerns with AFH operators, but such a significant policy change on the AFH resident maximum could potentially have grave effects on patient care. Any increase in resident limits needs to be more fully reviewed in a stakeholder-involved process, especially before initiating such an impactful change in AFH policy.

Oregon's adult care home model is based on keeping seniors and people with disabilities out of institutions and in their own homes or "home-like settings" for as long as possible. Caring for more than five AFH residents with often serious long term support needs is beyond what might be considered a "home-like setting". With more residents, there will be an obvious need for additional staffing, yet the legislation needs better clarification on staffing requirements that allow residents to receive the most appropriate levels of care. In addition, to accommodate this policy change, it would seem to ultimately require larger homes, potentially less privacy, meals that would be less than "home-like", and many other restrictions that would greatly affect care.

HB 2956-2 moves adult foster homes toward becoming "mini-institutions", which was never the intent of the pioneers that helped develop the adult foster home model. The true historic irony is that some advocates and providers thought even the current 5 residents to be excessive when adult foster homes were developed in the 1980s.

As a senior/disability advocate and professional actively involved since the inception

of Oregon's national model long term care system in the 1980s, I firmly believe we need to stay faithful to the home and community-based system that we dreamed of 40 plus years ago, and find other economic solutions to the business needs of AFH providers, including additional increases in reimbursement rates, which we strongly support. AFHs need to be adequately reimbursed, but HB 2956-2 is not the way to accomplish that goal, nor does it make sense to even consider such bad policy, even in a pilot project.

We need a much more comprehensive stakeholder conversation on the AHF situation before such a major and damaging change in Oregon senior/disability policy be initiated.

We sent a communication to Senator Meek during the last interim period supporting the creation of a stakeholder AFH legislative work group, including AFH operators, other affected providers, advocates, interested legislators and policy makers, and APD/ODHS staff, to discuss issues effecting AFHs, including the AFH financial difficulties and resident limits. There was no response and no effort to involve interested stakeholders. And, as a matter of fact, neither Senator Meek nor the AFH Industry has ever reached out to us, even though we have helped lead the opposition effort for the past 6 years, supported by most of the key senior/disability stakeholder groups.

We strongly urge you to oppose HB 2956.