

Campaign for Oregon's Seniors & People with Disabilities

Contact:

Rob Johnson • 503-726-5234

rjohnson@oregonindependencechoicedignity.org

INDEPENDENCE • CHOICE • DIGNITY

AARP Oregon

Advocacy Coalition of Seniors
and People with Disabilities

Alliance for Retired Americans

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 Brain Injury Association

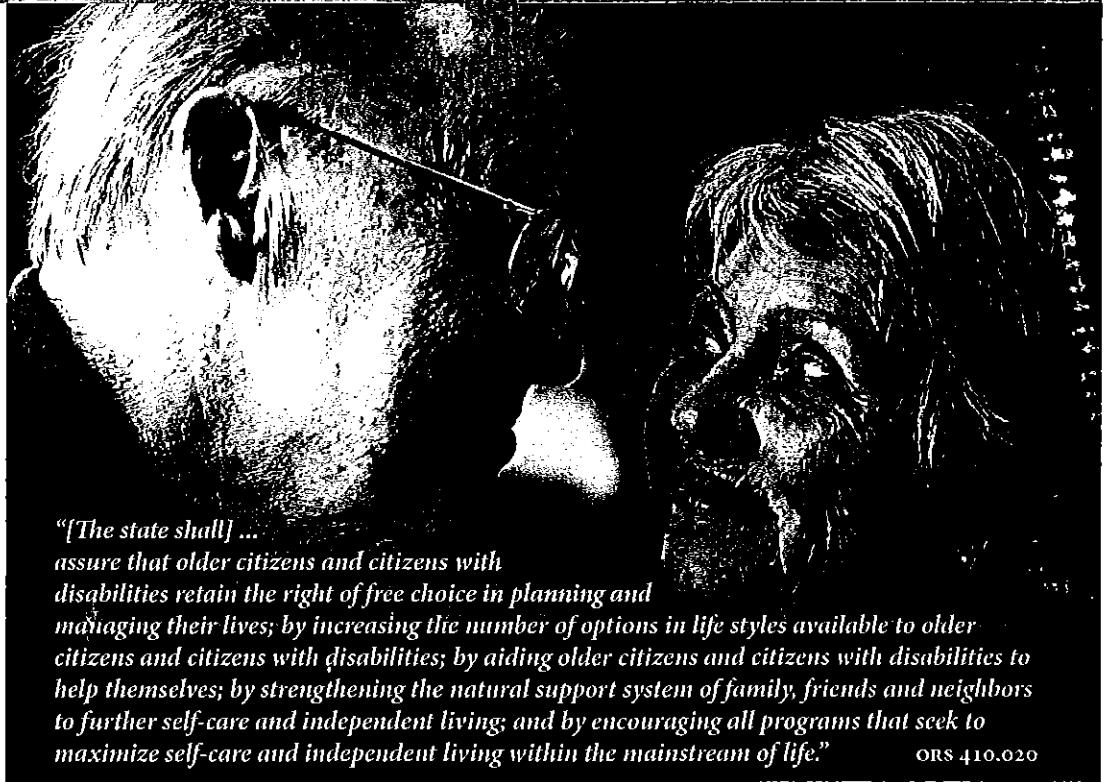
Oregon Health Care Association

Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens

Save Oregon Seniors

Service Employees International Union

United Seniors of Oregon



"[The state shall] ...

assure that older citizens and citizens with

disabilities retain the right of free choice in planning and

managing their lives; by increasing the number of options in life styles available to older

citizens and citizens with disabilities; by aiding older citizens and citizens with disabilities to

help themselves; by strengthening the natural support system of family, friends and neighbors

to further self-care and independent living; and by encouraging all programs that seek to

maximize self-care and independent living within the mainstream of life."

ORS 410.020

In less than 20 years, Oregon will see dramatic growth in its population of those aged 65 and older. While the total population is projected to increase by 47 percent, the 65+ population will more than double, comprising nearly one of every five Oregonians.

Over the last two decades, funding for Oregon's long-term care system as a percent of the state's general fund has decreased dramatically while caseloads have risen significantly. Neglect and disinvestment have left the system - once lauded as a national model - without the funding or infrastructure to deal with current needs, let alone growing, future ones.

The time to act and ensure our seniors and people with disabilities have fundamental access to quality care and home and community-based service choices is now.

The Campaign's 2008 Legislative Priorities

1. Increase access to assisted living, residential care and adult foster care services.
2. Expand availability of home-based care and Oregon Project Independence.
3. Strengthen Oregon's aging and disability services infrastructure.
4. Improve training for Oregon's caregiving workforce.
5. Preserve housing options for Oregon's most vulnerable.
6. Enhance mental health and addiction services for underserved populations.

Short-Term Solutions -

- **Increase access to assisted living, residential care and adult foster care services.**

The ability of seniors and people with disabilities to access assisted living, adult foster care and residential care facilities has grown dire. In the past year, more than 45 facilities have withdrawn their Medicaid contracts to instead serve exclusively private-pay residents as a result of the low rates paid by the state's Medicaid program. An *immediate* solution to stem the departure of providers from Oregon's Medicaid system is to provide additional support (\$260 per month Medicaid rate increase) to Oregon providers currently serving low-income Oregonians. This reinvestment is critical to prevent even greater loss of access to community-based care.

*Addressed in SB 1061;
Requires budget action.*

- **Strengthen Oregon's aging and disability services infrastructure.**

Oregon's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are the frontline for the state's long-term care system and first stop for vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities or their families seeking information on available services and programs. However, substantial funding disparity has forced agencies to do this work at less than the actual cost of services, creating increased caseload sizes and decreased ability to provide quality service and reduce waiting periods - all the more critical with growing needs and demand. A modest investment of \$1.3 million for the remaining biennium would allow AAAs to directly improve quality and accessibility.

*Addressed in SB 1061;
Requires budget action.*

- **Expand availability of home-based care and Oregon Project Independence (OPI).**

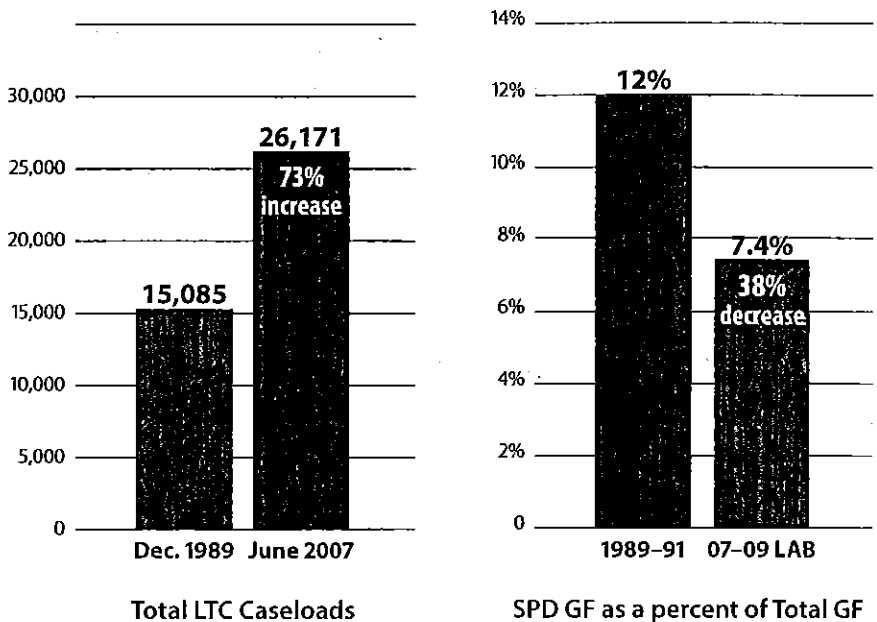
OPI helps to ensure that seniors most at risk of losing independence are reached with care and services that can help keep them independent and in their homes. It primarily serves seniors with incomes below poverty (2/3 of all recipients). Besides providing dignity and choice, the program is an extremely cost-effective alternative to more expensive Medicaid-funded services. Oregon's Area Agencies on Aging have long wait lists for OPI and must triage services for only a small percentage of eligible Oregonians. An investment of \$3 million for the last half of the biennium would begin to address this critical need of Oregon seniors.

*Addressed in SB 1061;
Requires budget action.*



Dwindling Resources

(How SPD Funding has Changed as Percent of Budget)



the 2008 Special Session



- Improve training for Oregon's caregiving workforce.**
 For seniors and people with disabilities, high quality care is directly tied to a well-trained, stable workforce. In recent years, direct care workers have made important strides in wages, benefits and training - all of which help reduce turnover and improve the quality of care. However, more must be done to meet vital caregiver and caregiving needs, especially in the face of workforce shortages and the fast-growing demands of an aging population. Ensuring financial resources for enhanced training during the last half of the biennium is an important step forward in making a lasting commitment to addressing this critical issue.

*Addressed in Senate Bill 1061;
Requires budget action.*

- Preserve housing options for Oregon's most vulnerable.**
 It is estimated that 7,000 rent subsidized units in 250 projects around the

state - many which house seniors and those with disabilities - are at risk of going to market rate rents. The "Preservation Revolving Loan Fund" proposed by the Housing Alliance comprises an investment of \$2 million that is anticipated to leverage \$26 to \$46 million, allowing potential purchasers to buy properties from willing sellers, keeping homes affordable for not only older residents or those with disabilities, but those of all ages.

Addressed in SB 1073.

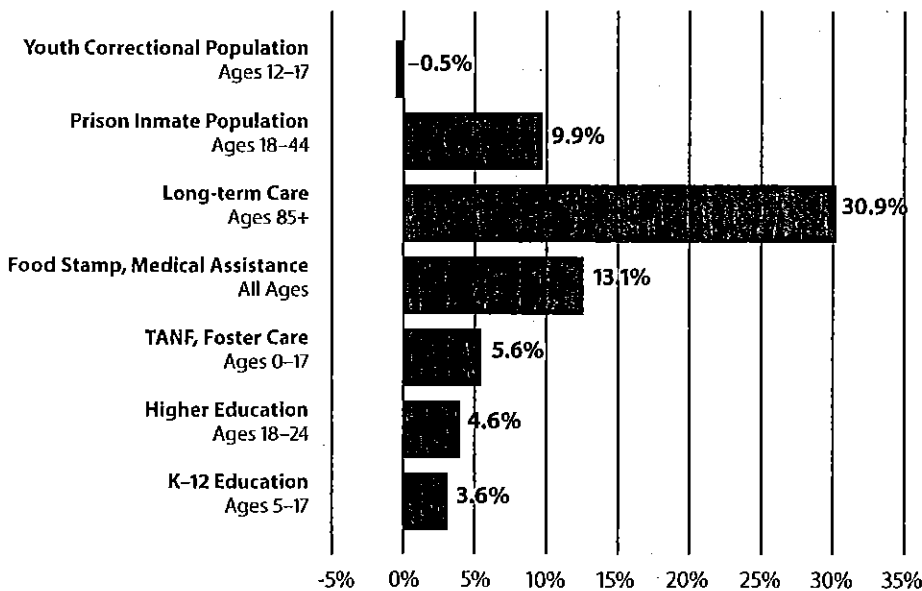
- Enhance mental health and addiction services for underserved populations.**

Senate Bill 1075 establishes a state task force on mental health and addiction needs of underserved populations, including seniors, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, who currently have few if any options within the current system but face higher affliction rates due to factors like loss, transition and mobility. This task force would develop recommendations for the Oregon Legislature to help turn around this critical lack of services for Oregonians in need.

Addressed in SB 1075.

Fast Growing Needs

(Projected Change in Budget Driver Populations 2005-2015)



OUR CAMPAIGN strongly supports the work of the Senate Committee on Services to Seniors and People with Disabilities and the House Human Services and Women's Wellness Subcommittee on Services to Seniors and People with Disabilities to begin to renew Oregon's promise of providing independence, choice and dignity to vulnerable Oregonians. The committees have started to address a few of these key challenges through their introduction of SB 1061. This bill also directs DHS to develop a long range plan for the future of Oregon's long term care system ... after all, 2008 is just a first step.

Long-Term Solutions - 2009 and Beyond

Oregon is at a critical crossroads and must prepare now for the future of its long-term care system and strengthen its once-lauded home and community-based model. Beyond the 2008 legislative session, Oregon must renew its promise to provide Oregon's seniors and people with disabilities independence, choice and dignity, specifically in these areas:

- o **Medicaid Access** - assuring low-income seniors and people with disabilities have access to the programs and services they need.
- o **Non-Medicaid Supports, including Oregon Project Independence** - assuring seniors and people with disabilities have access to a wide variety of quality programs that allow them choice and the ability to age in place and receive the care they need while carefully stretching state dollars more efficiently.
- o **Caregiving Workforce and Family Provider Supports** - assuring that both the caregiving workforce and unpaid family caregivers of seniors and people with disabilities have access to critical and expanded training, support and resources.
- o **Mental Health and Addictions** - assuring vulnerable seniors, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities have access to life-saving mental health and addictions programs and services.
- o **Adequate Housing and Transportation** - assuring seniors and people with disabilities have access to affordable housing and transportation options that can help keep them independent, mobile and a part of their communities.

