

COMMENTS ARE ORGANIZED BY BUDGET THEME.

Comments that addressed more than one theme were placed under the theme that seemed most closely related. Comments are listed in the order they were received.

1. VULNERABLE OREGONIANS HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

None.

2. OREGONIANS HAVE ACCESS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO THE MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND ADDICTIONS TREATMENT THEY NEED.

None.

3. SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LIVE SAFELY AND INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

From the Board and Membership of the Oregon Rehabilitation Association
Comments on DHS Budget Development for 2009-2011:

Members of our association are nonprofit providers of homes and jobs statewide for people with developmental disabilities. As employers of over 5,000 caregivers, the Oregon Rehabilitation Association recommends a \$30 million GF increase in rates for Comprehensive Supports for people with developmental disabilities in the '09-11 budget for the following reasons:

- The complexity of people receiving services is increasing in two distinct and growing categories: people with age-related complications and those newly entering the DD system with complex, multiple diagnoses (e.g., DD and mental illness). The age-related

problems of people with significant disabilities appear much sooner than with the general population, often appearing in the early to mid-50s. The baby-boomer bulge is severely taxing the skill level of DD staff.

- The addition of the Support Waiver for people with developmental disabilities has meant that the severity of disability level for those entering comprehensive (24-hour) services has greatly increased. A 2007 study sponsored by SPD (Building Oregon's Capacity to Serve Individuals with Complex Support Needs) recommended increased training and salary levels for direct support staff to meet the needs of these challenging individuals.

Last session ORA documented the need for a \$60 million increase in DD comprehensive rates. The Legislature appropriated \$20 million and many legislators acknowledged that the DD system remains badly underfunded. While this increase helped, it was preceded by nearly five years of stagnant DD rates. \$30 million in the 2009-2011 budget will allow:

- DD direct care wages/benefits to be sufficient to hire, train and retain employees qualified to support individuals with complex needs;
- Sufficient administrative funding to provide the necessary management and support structure to maintain quality systems; and
- Necessary increases in service and supply budgets.

Additionally, concerns about abuse reporting and incidents in the DD system that surfaced last year must be addressed. As James Toews, DHS Assistant Director for the Seniors and People with Disabilities Division, said, "We cannot monitor and sanction our way out of abuse...we have to invest in the work force." The \$30 million increase will greatly enhance the ability of community providers to improve management systems, training and staff development, and reduce turnover by a minimum of 50 percent.

The DD provider system is unique: It cannot pass on costs unmet by state funding because it has no other customers than the state. Without a significant increase in these rates, the system cannot guarantee the quality of services for one of Oregon's most vulnerable populations.

I am 75 years old. My wife is 59 years old, and in her seventh year of ALS, a horrible disease. For years our main help in Grants Pass, as seniors and seriously disabled citizens, has been HASL. Recently, we have been shocked at the insane removing of funds away from HASL and making huge increases among presidents of many universities and colleges in Oregon, from salaries in the \$100,000s to huge high \$300,000-plus salaries, to almost \$400,000 a year. At the same time our own expenses are increasing by actual study by 42 percent and we are given a 3 percent increase this year, which I call robbery and murder. More and more old people are shocked by what Oregon, under this Governor, is doing, and you will soon be one of the old people.

What can you do to change this, especially to return the needed funds of HASL? We meet with over 200 seniors and we want to start letters after letters if there is no help to us and to HASL. Without HASL we are lost. I was once as well quite famous, winning many cases in the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., written up in TIME, LIFE and LOOK and many other magazines and newspapers, and now what we hear today is, "Why don't you just die, you are a problem to us younger people!"

I have a brain stroke and a loved wife and you are taking away our very promises in this state. Give us our needed small amounts of money or it will turn back to you. I do not know write well, but I trust this is important to very many and the failure to return honesty will cost a great amount soon.

4. CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND HEALTHY.

None.

5. FAMILIES ARE SAFE AND STABLE.

The wise use of state dollars is to keep people in their own homes or occupied rental housing or subsidized housing so that people can continue to be employed, children and families can have stability in their daily lives, and seniors and disabled can maintain their dignity in their own homes rather than live in expensive care facilities. Continuing to offer, health insurance, food stamps, LIEAP benefits, OPI and all other benefits which help at-risk

individuals and families maintain stable lives is the state's best use of its dollars.

People who are financially challenged by circumstances beyond their control need temporary and long-term financial support. To neglect those who do not have the financial means to afford life's basic needs even though they may work full-time, and those who have worked but no longer can, and those with disabilities who are dependent on others for their well-being is to cause unnecessary pain and suffering and larger expense at the end of the process, which can be avoided at the beginning of the process.

Children are worth the efforts to enrich their lives and those at the end of their lives deserve our support to live their lives with dignity. People are more important than profits. Raise taxes if necessary, but leave no one behind. I thank you for your attention to these critical life-affirming decisions.

6. DHS PROMOTES PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

Please consider some funds for viral hepatitis C prevention activities. It is estimate that 10 times the number of Oregonians are chronically infected with HCV as HIV. This translates to as much morbidity and mortality related to HCV as HIV in the U.S. annually.

Presently, there are not federal or state funds supporting viral hepatitis prevention activities save FTE and package funding for an Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator in Oregon's Public Health Division. This level of funding is wholly insufficient to meet the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention needs of persons at risk for, and chronically living with, HCV.

I am sending this e-mail to let you know that a Birth Defects Surveillance System in Oregon is highly necessary. As an Oregon resident I feel we need to be able to track the number and types of birth defects occurring in our state. Oregon should not be one of the few states without such a program.

I am the Board President for the Oregon Toxics Alliance. As far as I'm concerned, DHS is on the right track in its intent to examine the relationship between environmental contamination (pollution, chemical toxicity) and health risks. Although this may necessitate additional outlays in the beginning, ultimately cleaning up our environment and reducing our exposure to toxic chemicals will result in immense savings from reduced health care costs. (See OEC's recent report, *The Price of Pollution: Cost Estimates of Environmentally-Related Disease in Oregon*, available at <http://oeonline.volcano.onenw.org/kidshealth/priceofpollution/index>.)

I have been actively working for about a year with a coalition of environmental groups to institute chemicals policy reform in Oregon, and we appreciate the potential that DHS has to play a leadership role in this effort. We are currently broadening our coalition to bring in other environmental groups, businesses and labor organizations. As we understand it, toxics reduction is one of DEQ's top four priorities for the next legislative session, and also one of the Governor's top four natural resources priorities. We look forward to working alongside the agencies in the 2009 legislative session and beyond to bring these priorities to fruition.

For such policies to be effectively implemented, DHS will have to play a pivotal role in gathering the pertinent data and implementing new and innovative programs ensuring that our exposures to toxic chemicals in our home, school and natural environments are reduced to the utmost degree possible. The lives of all Oregonians, including children, the elderly and other sensitive individuals, are literally in your hands. We are counting on you to look out for our interests. Our platform, A Call for Safer Chemicals, follows.

A call for safer chemicals to protect our health and environment

Recognizing that every Oregonian is accumulating a body burden of toxic chemicals associated with health impacts, we call for common-sense chemical policies to ensure that only the safest chemicals are used in Oregon.

Whereas:

- Everyone has a right to live in a safe and healthy environment without exposures to toxic chemicals that threaten development and long-term health;
- Oregon needs a healthy environment with thriving wildlife and clean air, water, soil and food for all;
- Some populations are more vulnerable to chemical exposures including pregnant women, infants, children and workers;
- Safe and clean design of chemicals, materials and products is good for businesses, workers, communities and ecosystems; and
- Using chemicals wisely will ensure a healthy Oregon for future generations.

We support new approaches that will:

- Provide complete information on chemical ingredients and their toxicity. The burden to prove that chemicals are safe before they are allowed on the market will fall to producers/manufacturers. Chemical safety data will be made available to the public and regulators. This data must take in to account impacts on vulnerable populations. Due to the size of this information management task, Oregon should support the development of an interstate clearinghouse for chemical ingredients.
- Categorize chemicals into levels of concern. The public, businesses, workers and consumers should have the tools to distinguish among chemicals. A chemical categorization system will identify safer chemicals, chemicals to avoid, and chemicals which lack adequate safety data.
- Manage chemicals based on hazards and substitute those of highest concern with safer alternatives. Oregon would use criteria to identify chemicals of concern and have the authority to restrict certain chemical uses. State agencies should have the authority to identify, collect data on and mandate the replacement of chemicals of highest concern.
- Establish tools to move Oregon toward a healthier environment. In order to move the market toward safer chemicals, Oregon should:

- ❖ Invest in and build in-state institutional alternatives research capacity.
 - ❖ Promote sustainable procurement policies for state, local, and municipal governments and other large institutions such as hospitals, universities, and schools.
 - ❖ Ensure that all communities can participate in new green economy by creating incentives for investment.
 - ❖ Create tax incentives for and provide technical assistance to firms working toward safer alternatives.
 - ❖ Increase and direct research and economic development dollars to promote safer alternatives, particularly in key sectors ripe for alternatives.
- Ensure that workers and impacted communities are protected. Oregon needs to address both concerns around loss of jobs from a transition to safer chemicals and whether alternatives are indeed safer. This means incorporating policies that support a just transition to cleaner, safer jobs. Oregon should also ensure that chemicals of concern to environmental justice communities are prioritized.
 - Provide adequate funding and enforcement. Oregon needs to create the funding and enforcement mechanisms necessary to successfully implement chemical policy reform. Resources for technical assistance and program implementation are essential to ensuring a level playing field for businesses.

7. SERVICES ARE SAFE AND AVAILABLE IN COMMUNITIES WHEN THEY ARE NEEDED.

None.

8. DHS HAS THE CAPACITY TO MEET CLIENTS' NEEDS.

First I would like to congratulate the department leadership on taking the initial steps to becoming the industry standard in public human services operations in the USA. The move to take a wholesale look at how the department does business is long overdue, but much appreciated. I believe

that in a multi-billion dollar organization there must be significant inefficiencies in operations that, if streamlined/improved, would free up tens of millions of dollars (perhaps more) that could be spent on improving the direct support for Oregonians in need.

Some of the state inefficiencies are observed by organizations like ours, who contract with DHS (or in the case of DD services indirectly through the counties) in all three divisions, and who experience significant duplication in state licensing activities. It would save all of us time and effort if duplication in licensing efforts were streamlined.

As an organization, we have provided leadership, and have a significant investment, in having Oregon adopt a “wraparound” approach to children’s mental health services. This approach to caring for children/families with significant mental health challenges is evidence-based/clinically effective and cost-effective. We encourage the department and the Legislature to move this initiative forward as an integral part of the state strategy to improve the mental health system for Oregon’s children.

We also would ask you to put the following into the DHS-recommended 2009-2011 budget:

- Fully fund the request made by the Oregon developmental disabilities service community in the 2007-2009 legislative session. The request was for \$60 million to increase direct care worker wages. The 2007 Legislature funded 1/3 of this request and now the 2009 Legislature should finish the job (i.e., allocate \$40 million in the coming session). If funded, this would significantly reduce turnover rates and increase the safety and quality of care for people with developmental disabilities. The Legislature should be reminded that when they closed the state institution for people with developmental disabilities (Fairview Training Center) in 2000 they promised to adequately fund community-based care. To date, they have not done so.
- Fund a state registry available to developmental disabilities services providers that identifies individuals who demonstrate a pattern of client abuse so that these folks are not rehired to perpetuate abuse in other work settings.

- Adjust reimbursement rates for children’s mental health services to better reflect the cost of care based upon the findings of a soon-to-be-released cost study conducted by MCPPP Healthcare Consulting, Inc. For example, this independent study shows a 36 percent negative variance between the current state reimbursement rate for sub-acute psychiatric residential services (\$432/day) and the actual cost (\$587/day). Rate-to-actual cost differentials of this magnitude, if not corrected, will inevitably lead to elimination of this service in the future.

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