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Lawmakers fulfill commitment to Seniors, allocate millions

Emergency Board approves remainder of \$26 million specifically designated for senior services

SALEM – The Emergency Board of the Oregon State Legislature voted this morning to allocate over \$3 million to programs and services that help seniors keep their independence. The funding makes up the remainder of \$26 million set aside during the 2013 Special Session that was specially designated for senior services.

“Promises were made and these promises have been kept,” said Senator Alan Bates (D-Medford), co-chair of the Joint Emergency Board Subcommittee on Human Services. “This funding will allow more Oregon seniors to retain their independence by eliminating the wait list for Oregon Project Independence over the next six months.”

Oregon Project Independence (OPI), created by the Legislature in 1975, provides funding to keep Oregonians off of Medicaid and in their own homes. There are currently hundreds of Oregonians on waiting lists for OPI services.

“This program allows seniors to stay in their homes by providing professional help with household chores and personal care,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Oregon Project Independence has long been a priority for Senate Democrats. In the upcoming 2015 Session, we will continue this commitment to helping seniors stay independent.”

In addition to the allocation to OPI, the Emergency Board today approved significant funding for expanding or improving special needs transportation options. Local transit districts will receive grants averaging \$32,000, allowing them to leverage federal funds and immediately add additional service hours or replace vehicles.

Also included in this morning's appropriation was funding for an Alzheimer's disease Public Awareness Campaign and an allocation to complement current work to help train workers to better identify and care for people with dementia.

"Today we solidly fulfilled the legislative commitment made to seniors during the 2013 Special Session," said Senator Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee. "We are committed to maintaining this level of support for our seniors in the 2015-2017 budget."

The 78th Legislative Assembly will convene on January 12th, 2015.

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