



# SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Senate establishes public guardian to protect vulnerable seniors** *SB 1553B provides support to help seniors attend to personal, medical, and financial affairs*

SALEM – Today the Oregon Senate approved legislation to create an advocate for vulnerable seniors. Senate Bill 1553B, which creates a statewide public guardian and conservator, passed on a vote of 30-0.

Adults facing severe mental health conditions, developmental disabilities, and age-related conditions may lack the capacity to make personal, medical and financial decisions. Without a trusted friend or family member to provide assistance, vulnerable adults must face tough life decisions without adequate support.

“More and more low-income Oregonians with dementia, mental illness, and developmental disabilities are falling through Oregon’s safety net every day, especially in the more rural parts of the state,” said Senator Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), chief sponsor of the bill. “They fall victim to abuse and exploitation, and are being unnecessarily placed in institutions at great expense to the state. Senate Bill 1553 will at long last provide the resources to keep them safe and preserve their dignity.”

Currently only Multnomah County provides a public guardian option. As a result, many Oregonians in need of a guardian are unable to access one.

Senate Bill 1553B establishes a statewide public guardianship program under the existing office of the state’s Long Term Care Ombudsman. The bill also creates the position of Oregon Public Guardian and Conservator, who will work to provide services for seniors and other Oregonians who lack the financial services to hire a private guardian.

“With a statewide public guardian, we can provide critical support to seniors and other vulnerable Oregonians,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Senate Democrats have made it a priority to invest in services that will protect at-risk citizens, and we

hope this bill prevents harm to those that don't have a friend or family member there to offer support.”

The bill now goes to the Oregon House of Representatives for further action.

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