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I wish to provide (select one):	written comment
If you are providing VERBAL comment, how do you plan to attend the meeting (select one):	
I want to provide comment at (select one):	OWEB Board DEI committee
Agenda Topic / Item Letter	Draft Equity Resolution
	First, I would like to invite this committee to more fully address disability inclusion in future resolution drafts. While we are mentioned in the list of environmental justice communities, we are omitted from paragraph 4 describing types of diversity. I could write an entire essay on the ways the professional field of environmental science is ableist, but I will focus on the ways ableism impacts people with physical and cognitive disabilities. Those of us with invisible disabilities are unemployed at a rate 3 times higher than those with visible disabilities, and 6 times higher than able-bodied, neurotypical workers. Those receiving SSDI benefits are required to live in extreme poverty, with a monthly benefit equal that can barely cover basic rent in most areas; inevitably that leads to higher rates of homelessness, and those who are sheltered often live in the most toxic areas in substandard housing - the very definition of environmental injustice. But aside from visibility in a document, there remains the problem of

workplace visibility and inclusion. While the Department of Labor is developing initiatives around better integrating people with disabilities in the workplace, grant-funded organizations like Watershed Councils and SWCDs, lack the capacity to train and support Directors & Managers in effective inclusive management practices. Instead they are burning out, overwhelmed by confusing requirements and expanding needs of an increasingly large and diverse staff. Meanwhile staff are traumatized by the often harsh and ableist supervisory practices the untrained resort to, resulting in a high (but politely untraceable) body count of neurodivergent staff turnover. If our managers can't even embody DEI-J principles with people who look like them and come from a similar background, how on earth are they to succeed in managing people of different races and ethnicities (or is it that we need some physical marker to remind people to treat us humanely)? While exclusion in the workplace is readily disguised as standard HR practices, I believe a solid case can be made that loss of staff due to failure of management is ultimately a failure of adequate financial support - not just for inclusive leadership training & coaching, but for adequate funds to hire enough staff to maintain reasonable enough workloads to even have the time to learn and grow. Considering the cost of replacing any one position is 50% - 200% over and above the annual salary package, there is a clear financial incentive to improve organization-level leadership capacity to motivate and retain diverse hires. Beyond the carefully-crafted words of a resolution, I hope the Committee and Board plans to financially support functionally inclusive workplaces funded by OWEB capacity grants. While it might seem counterintuitive, investing in the capacity to lead equitably would result in more efficient and effective project outcomes. I recognize that OWEB formed to support volunteer-led councils, but it is a far different reality a quarter-century later. Now nearly all of us support multiple staff, and with that growth comes newly-applicable employee protection requirements (Oregon's disability laws apply to employers of 6 or more people). Now we risk disqualification from massive Federal grants for discrimination violations. The stakes are far too high to bootstrap ballooning responsibilities, under constant pressure to do more without costing more. Simply put: just, equitable, and inclusive leadership practices take time and money to implement - otherwise a resolution remains an intellectual exercise. Fortunately, many of the same leadership tools that support the success of qualified workers with disabilities are also effective in supporting other diverse identities, including Authentic Leadership, Trauma-Informed Workplaces, Organizational Behavior & Development, to name a few. I hope you will accept my comment in the spirit it is offered: not as a condemnation of some sort of deficiency, but as an opportunity to share knowledge. I'm writing this from a place of hope, because I believe OWEB can -and wants to- do better. Because ongoing struggles with my brain and body are part of my own intersectional identity, I am inevitably a fierce advocate of disability justice. My own future includes some difficult decisions around identifying a workplace that can provide inclusive leadership

	and appropriate supports to enable my continued participation in the workforce. It breaks my heart, because I fell in love with the Watershed Council model from the minute I learned about it in the Environmental Science curriculum at OSU and changed my whole career trajectory to support this work. I never imagined that this work couldn't support me in return. Thank you for your consideration.
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