

Submitter: Natasha Durant
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB646

Dear Legislators,

I am the mother of a special needs child. In fact I have 2 children with higher medical needs. I had goals to return to work shortly after my oldest was born, but I have never been able to return to traditional full or part time employment since. My oldest is now 13.

All this time my family has both struggled and been okay depending on my husbands working status, but mainly due to my parents opening their home to us when we knew I couldn't go back to work and afford the care needed for my child.

Both my husband and I have lived in Oregon our whole lives. And due to one income we have never been able to afford to buy a house or rent since my oldest child was born. He actually is a very unique kid, his genome has been being studied since 2016 at the NIH, they still do not have a diagnosis for him. So due to that, we have never qualified for services or paid caregivers. Without that diagnosis we are left to manage without any assistance. If I would be able to get anyone other than my husband or I, or a felon, to come watch my child if my child was diagnosed, why should us parents not be allowed to receive that pay when we are well versed in their care needs. We know our children best, and continuity of care is much stronger without having rotating care givers. I believe we should also be allowed services in our situation as I am sure others face being undiagnosed as well.

My husband has worked countless overtime hours to provide our kids a life, and my parents have taken on wear and tear of their property, increased utilities, and more crowded living. All of this could be eased if I could qualify as a paid caregiver for my child. The child I brought into this world, my pride and joy, my child that I would do anything for to see him succeed, reach milestones and grow stronger each day. The system needs to change its time to give these kids their parents time, time with the people who love them the most without multi generations of families making huge sacrifices to ensure they are well taken care of. It's time for parents to be considered payable caregivers especially in the face of a huge nationwide in home care provider shortage. People are on wait lists for years, and some matches aren't a good fit. Let us parents be the missing workforce!

-Natasha