

Submitter: Jennifer Hagerty
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB646

My name is Jennifer Hagerty, I live in Eugene Oregon, and I am the mother of two boys who experience intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD). I am writing to advocate that SB646 become law. At the age of 4, my youngest son had a Personal Support Worker (PSW) who was using drugs while on the clock. I was out of town taking my oldest son to a medical conference for his Ectodermal Dysplasias. While his PSW was passed out, my 4- year-old eloped and was found on the side of the road. Four hours later he was picked up by the Sheriff. We terminated this PSW immediately. One week later she was able to resume providing care for another child in town who also experiences intellectual developmental disabilities. There was no accountability. There were no criminal charges filed so she returned to the pool of prospective employees. We now have a PSW who is willing to work 12 hours a week but only shows up when it is beneficial for her. She has no call no showed and called out more times than I can count. Again, there is zero accountability because that is the caliber of workforce we must choose from. We are in a position of some assistance is better than no assistance. As a natural support and Mother, my time is split between two children who require 1:1 assistance or monitoring for the entire day and even during sleeping hours to prevent elopement. Alone, I am unable to meet both of their needs and simultaneously have gainful employment. It is my hope that SB646 becomes law allowing me to be compensated for the work I am required to do when there are no adequately trained PSWs available to select from. PSWs who will actually show up for their shift and have continuity with my family and child. Additionally, the state does not require PSW or DSP to be drug tested and this puts our most vulnerable children at risk. I am curious, how would you feel letting a stranger into your home to care for your child knowing that they could be using illicit drugs? Not very safe or secure I imagine. As parents, there is no one more invested in the health, well-being, long-term success, and quality of life of my children than me. At this time, I am requesting that the Oregon Health Authority request Federal approval to allow parents to be paid to act as personal support professionals for minor children. This will help ensure we avoid the need for institutionalization or a family crisis due to the lack of adequate employees to fulfill my son's allotted support from the Department of Human Services. Thank you for your time and assistance with SB646. It is my sincere hope that you will hear my concerns and understand the desperate needs of my family and all others who experience similar struggles across the state.