

February 8, 2023

To members of the Senate and Human Services Committee:

I am writing my testimony today from my six year old daughter's hospital bedside while she fights pneumonia. During Monday's hearing, you called out my name for in-person testimony. My story was supposed to be a culmination of almost three years of advocating for the idea that Oregon parents could apply for the job of their underage child's paid caregiver. Ironically, the reason I couldn't attend at the last minute was because my daughter's inpatient care was subpar, and she became so dire due to the nurse missing doses of her fever reducer, that she spiked a 105 degree fever and we genuinely thought we were going to lose her on Monday morning.

At the very moment I was supposed to be driving to Salem to paint a picture for you of how myself and my husband are the best and most qualified caregivers for Winnie, I was in the most real-life example of it you could ever imagine, and obviously I chose her. I always choose her. I'm happy to report that after I took over all of her care while inpatient, and instructed them that we would be following MY schedule for her care, she turned a corner, thankfully.

In this particular ambulance ride and hospital stay (we've had too many to count), I've been asked over and over again by medical personnel "so what line of medicine are you in professionally?" I get this ALL the time. The ability to speak clinically, make quick decisions, and keep cool under pressure about everything regarding my child has been learned over the last six years. I'm a restaurant general manager by day, and a pharmacist, physical therapist, respiratory therapist, registered nurse, dietician, wound care expert, occupational therapist, speech therapist, and care coordinator by night.

The truth is, I am very skilled at finding caregivers. It's in my skillset from my career in hospitality management. I put ads out at local nursing schools, and am always chasing down help for our family. Even with that advantage, I only average to use about 10 percent of Winnie's allotted 440 hours a month with outside caregivers. This is after allowing them to have whatever schedule they desire. We don't turn down ANY help, and it doesn't even come close to meeting our needs. That is why this program is so important, because it gives families CHOICE. I will continue to enlist outside caregivers even when parents are allowed to fill this role. But, I deserve to be able to fill that job 90 percent of the time when I have no one else. Like Shasta Kearns Moore said in her presentation, "it's not us versus them." Paying parents frankly has nothing to do with the homecare worker crisis shortage. If anything it strengthens it! It has not harmed the workforce for above 18 year olds when their parents are allowed to be paid. Its crisis level staffing across all avenues of healthcare.

A key problem I have with SB 91 is the caps on agencies to 30 percent of parent pay. This creates ANOTHER waiting list for this program, and does nothing to actually bolster the workforce. Would it make sense to administer food stamps to people who have proven a need, and then cut the amount of stores in impoverished areas that accept EBT? Utilization of a

program that makes sense and saves lives and saves families needs to be functional, and the hope of lawmakers should be to have as high of utilization rates as possible. Please remove this barrier from the bill so that families aren't waiting (again) for a child to age out or die before they are able to access a lifeline like this.

Please find a way to get this program passed in Oregon. Don't let all the other states adopting these policies pass us by. Continue to lead with common sense policies in the world of DD & IDD.

Respectfully,  
Jennifer Hoyt