

Submitter: Shannda Hickcox
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB646

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon's Developmentally Disabled children deserve access to the best, most qualified caregivers, their parents. No one knows the needs of our states most vulnerable children better than their parents. Please pass SB 646 out of committee.

I have been caring for adults and children with I/DD for over 17 years. I have worked in group homes, as a personal support worker, in a few adult foster homes, supported living, and even program management positions prior to and since having my second daughter who was later diagnosed with Autism. I had to step back and down from being able to work nearly as much as I previously had caring for others to care for her. By the time my daughter started kindergarten we had already seen great improvements but we still have so much work to do, I saw the signs early and started working with her before I could even possibly get an evaluation for her. Most parents do not have all of the experience in the field that I do but I have met so many of the past 9 years while supporting my child as well as others and I can say without hesitation these parents are their primary and best caregivers.

I am also a single mother, and I do still work when I can with others, but being able to make a decent living to provide for both of my daughters has been very hard to find and keep with the exceptional supports that my exceptional child has. The lack of sufficient, dedicated and trained caregivers is a real problem and parents like myself cannot use traditional daycare, they do not accept and cannot support our kids. The only 1:1 day support program that I have ever been able to access no longer exists due to OAR updates no longer allowing center based supports.

My family will end up needing to rely on self sufficiency programs to survive if my ability to work for and support my daughter ends. I am again reliant on only me to care for my child with her exceptional supports needs, no trained staff are able to do the job that I am supposed to have access to. These are approved hours that are not filled which in turn leaves families without supports that are needed and have been promised. The crisis in this workforce has been a severe problem for far longer then I have been in the business or needed the care for my own child.

My daughter is going to turn 10 in a few months and I have had to leave far more then 5 jobs in just the last 5 of those years. I have relocated my family several times to attempt to find better support programs and schools that can appropriately support her as well as jobs that will and can accommodate my scheduling conflicts and even

though we are stable now, we are without support workers or any respite for me that is desperately needed.

A few years ago I had to buy a travel trailer and moved the 3 of us into it for nearly a year to avoid homelessness, this struggle is not uncommon for many families like mine.

Please do the right thing for your Oregonian families and fulfill the promises made to provide the best support for our vulnerable children and their families by letting them be cared for by the best paid support these children can access, their parents.

Sincerely,

Shannda Hickcox