



Testimony for SB 576

My name is Nickole Cheron

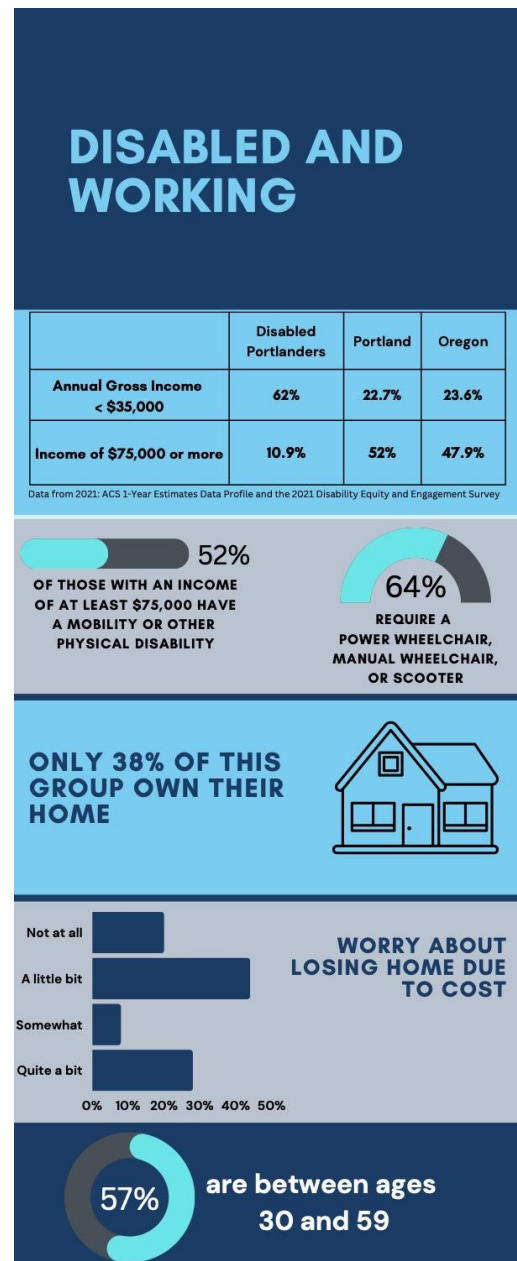
I work as the ADA Title II & Disability Equity Manager for the City of Portland.

My position at the City is partly compliance, helping the city ensure they are doing their due diligence under the Americans with Disability Act; the other part of my job is trying to move the City beyond compliance toward disability equity by eliminating systemic ableist policies and practices.

In 2012, under my leadership in collaboration with the Portland Commission on Disability, the City Council adopted a [Resolution](#) around model employment of people with disabilities. The idea behind the policy is first and foremost that government workers should be representative of the community they serve. This becomes especially important around city projects and programs that focus on the built environment. Unfortunately, there is under representation of people with severe disabilities who are impacted by the built-in environment working in the government. The truth of the matter is there is a under representation of people with disabilities in employment in Oregon. We recently put out a report on the state of people with disabilities in Portland.

There are many barriers for people with functional disabilities such as mobility, blindness, deafness, developmental and cognitive in finding employment. There is a pervasive stigma in our country around able-bodiedness and who is hireable. That is not the only reason people with disabilities have high unemployment.

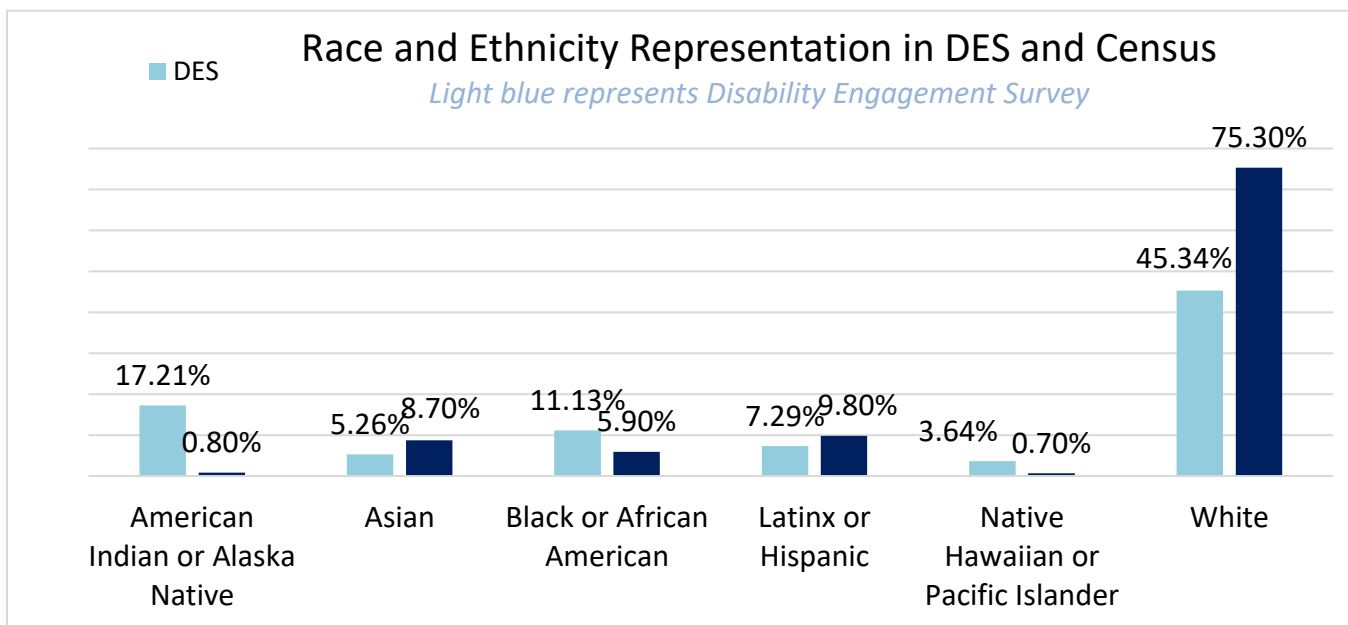
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There are also policies that create systemic ableism. I have staff on my team who are legally blind and yet because of limitations in SAP software they cannot fill out their own timesheets, or even know the balance of their PTO. For people with mobility disabilities there are barriers around the built environment of facilities but there are also financial barriers for those who require caregiving support from the state. Because of the income and asset caps many people who require caregivers often feel that the essential service of caregiving is more important than any personal gain or reward from advancing in one's career least you fall out of the income cap range. When the State created these provisions their part of the policy holds that people cannot have more than \$5000 at a time in their bank account. Living in the city of Portland that is barely enough money to cover rent and expenses and it certainly isn't enough to be able to save if perhaps someone might want to own their own home or buy an accessible vehicle. These policies keep in people with disabilities in cycles of poverty because they are not able to build equity, they're not able to invest and they certainly aren't able to create any sort of generational wealth for their children. Yet they work 40 hours a week and contribute to taxes.

Being an equity practitioner, I am very aware of how both systemic racism and systemic ableism have created a cycle of keeping people in poverty. This is not just a disability issue it is a racial justice issue. In our city of Portland there is a disproportionately high number of people who identify as Indigenous and Black and disabled.

The City of Portland is committed to hiring more people who can represent the intersection of race and disability. We believe supporting this bill and eliminating income and asset caps will help us not only diversify our pool of representation but even further move folks with the skill set and accomplishment into higher levels of management in our institution.



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