

Submitter: Christine Getman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB576

Dear Chair Senator Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Senator Robinson, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

I'm submitting written testimony in support SB 576. Asset and income restrictions unjustly penalize disabled workers who need access to healthcare.

Each time I provide testimony, I find myself having to share very personal details about my disability and my life. This legislation is no exception. Your time reviewing testimony and receptiveness to our collective vulnerability being shared is greatly appreciated.

I have a disability called Spinal Muscular Atrophy, type 2, which is a degenerative neuromuscular disease that has progressively affected my mobility. I use a wheelchair, as well as a tracheostomy and ventilator.

Throughout my career, I have supported businesses and organizations with strategic planning, project management, fundraising and grant writing, accessibility, program development, marketing and design. I'm now a policy analyst in public health and an executive director for another organization but, because of the current income restrictions, my second role is unpaid.

I'm on the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program in order to retain my access to long term supports and services, my caregivers who are with me around the clock. My caregivers are the reason I'm independent and employed.

Those of us on the EPD program have extra work to do beyond our day jobs, because we are always calculating and double-checking the numbers each month. We have to verify that our qualified disability related and employment related expenses are correct, and sufficient. We are a unique population that has to navigate how becoming a taxpayer or how achieving career advancement can lead to unjust penalty and loss of vital healthcare. There is always a concern about eligibility, and it feels like the rug could be ripped out from under me. When the public health emergency ends, I fear that I will have to make some very tough decisions.

This legislation has even greater implications beyond the individual folks enrolled in the EPD program. Income and asset restrictions diminish the potential of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in workplaces. Whether we're talking about corporate America, government, or even the entertainment industry, you simply

cannot have diversity, equity, and inclusion without disability. You cannot have disability representation when folks with disabilities are stripped of their access to healthcare if they accept the job. This results in non-disabled people getting the job and making decisions about us, and even what we have access to. By definition, this is systemic ableism. These industries need us, our skills, and our lived experience. This important legislation gives you an opportunity to uplift Oregonians with disabilities, like myself, by removing a layer of systemic ableism.

I'm a taxpayer. I'm an employer. My friends and family (lovingly) call me a workaholic, but I really do love working. The minute I lose access to caregiving, is the minute I lose my job.

Please support Senate Bill 576.

Thank you,
Christine Getman