

Date: March 11th, 2023

To: Way and Means Committee

From: Pete Denman

Subject: SB 576

I am Pete Denman a design researcher at Intel Corporation And a member of the Disability Health & Employment Equity Coalition. I am here today to testify on SB 576.

Please support senate bill 576. The state and federal government has built up a system of programs that offers a ramp of opportunities from healthcare benefits to housing and schooling giving us opportunities to contribute to society, but it falls short in one critical piece. It doesn't allow us to work or if we are able to work it discriminates against us, not allowing us to earn enough money to get off of the programs.

I've been so lucky. I was hurt at a time when every opportunity unfolded right as I needed it. The ADA came into place in the years, I was recovering and was fully adopted right when I moved out of my parents house at the age of 22 and into the world. Vocational rehabilitation had been revitalized and offering great opportunities for people with disabilities. The ticket to work program was voted in to the federal government in 1999 one year after I graduated from college. The EPD program was established and working by the time I took my corporate job in 2005. I managed to be charming, diligent (relentless) and flexible with my counselors over the years from DHS, who more or less stayed out of my way and help me get one step further year over year. I don't make enough to get through. I've not taken promotions, and have sat in one spot when I have been offered jobs that pay more in other places, because I knew that the safety of this program and the relationships I've built were the things that allowed me to sustain this career and lifestyle. It's a torturous way to live your life. It's like being on thin ice all of the time and climate change is an active threat. For somebody like myself that is in a middle career job that pays too much to be on the program, but not enough to pay for all of my services is what I need to do for a couple years so that I can get to the next level. That next level will give me the money and resources to pay for my own way. I just can't sandbag enough money or resources to get over that hump. A high-earning job for someone like myself, shouldn't be an anomaly. which could work like I'm complaining about something that seems in consequential asking for more than I deserve.

"Asking for more than I deserve" this right here is discrimination. Something I just didn't realize until the last few months of working to solve this issue, and embedding myself more in the movement of accessibility. I've never even heard the word ableism until I started focusing in on this project. It's something that I'm actually both ashamed of and kind of proud of. I'm ashamed because I should've been paying more attention. I shouldn't let other people fight my battles and develop all of these programs and services that I've taken advantage of. I'm also a little proud of that as well, because I just put my head down after getting injured and told myself "well, this is your life you better get on with it" that's what I did.

The Medicaid website actually spells it out quite nicely. It's cheaper for Medicaid and many other programs when somebody is working, then, if they're not. It's better for society, and the health of the person who's working as well. This program will save us money and give people with disabilities new opportunities, while also adding to a desperately needed workforce. Thank you for considering this bill please take a look at some of the videos we have curated describing how the impact will change peoples lives. <https://disabilityequitycoalition.org/impact-stories/>

Support

The Disability Health & Employment Equity Coalition of Oregon

SB 576

It's good for **Oregon**

Medicaid

Quotes

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Medicaid Buy-In participants incurred lower annual Medicaid costs than other adult disabled Medicaid enrollees

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When workers with disabilities don't need to suppress their income to ensure access to critical healthcare services, employers are able to attract and retain more workers.

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