

Submitter: Nicole Beckage
On Behalf Of: SB 576
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

My name is Nicole Beckage and I live in Portland (Senate District 21 and House District 42). I am writing in support of SB 576 which would eliminate asset and income eligibility caps for employed people with disabilities.

My involvement in this type of effort stems from my activist years as a graduate student where we modeled our calls to action (for fair pay and guaranteed employment) off of the many efforts around disability rights activism. While I have read much of the literature in this area, I, as an able bodied woman, have never encountered the systematic biases that individuals with disabilities navigate in their day to day lives.

The learnings I had taken from the disability rights movements moved from theoretical to actual in the last few years when I joined a research team with a quadriplegic designer. To say he has taught me a lot would be an understatement. Not just in internalizing and understanding the constant challenge of living with a disability but also in how regularly and often we must advocate for fairness and equity.

Because we have worked most closely together during Covid, I have had the chance to visit his house and meet some of his caregivers. On a day to day basis, in the work context, I would never know how much support he required to live as a fully integrated member of Portland and of Intel. But he requires so much support. And that support costs money and employs other individuals in and around Portland. However, his job is threatened by the fact that he may lose the money he needs to pay for his caregivers because he makes a full salary at Intel. If this happens, he would have to give up his job to pay for the care he requires to live. Not only does the thought of losing my colleague deeply sadden me, it also seems like a completely fixable situation. My colleague would not only be happier working full time, but he would be giving much more back to his community and state at the same time.

I believe that the passage of SB 576 would be a move toward fairness and equity and I hope you both as my representatives will support this bill. My colleague not only contributes meaningful work to our company and team but also to our community. And he is just one example of thousands. He is a wonderful colleague and contributor in part because of his disability and punishing him for being successful in his work life seems shortsighted. We have an opportunity to help him and many others through the passage of SB 576.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.
Please reach out with any additional questions via email. I am happy to speak further on this issue.

Best,
Nicole Beckage