

January 24, 2025

On behalf of: So Every *Body* Can Move, Senate Bill 699

Position: Support/Favorable

Dear Senate Health Care Committee members,

As an amputee, college educator, and mom, I know access to movement is essential to living a healthy, vibrant life. For this reason, I wish to express my support for Senate Bill 699, which would mandate insurance coverage for orthotics and prosthetics for physical activity and support individuals with limb loss or limb differences. Senate Bill 699 is pending in the Oregon Senate Health Care Committee and I urge you to support this bill.

Imagine being unable to participate in physical activities, explore Oregon's great outdoors, or engage in everyday life, simply because your insurance refuses to cover devices necessary for those actions. This is the harsh reality for nearly 50,000 Oregonians with limb loss or limb difference. A prosthetic or orthotic device doesn't restore full mobility or function; yet, insurance often deems additional devices as "not medically necessary." Families must pay high, out-of-pocket costs (\$5,000-\$20,000), rely on charity, or go without access.

Current practices discriminate against Oregonians with disabilities and limit their capacity to live full and healthy lives. Meanwhile, covering devices for physical activity has a minimal impact on insurance premiums (a fiscal study estimated it would cost \$0.17 PMPM), while providing long term social and fiscal benefits by improving health access and equity for Oregonians with disabilities.

I've been an amputee since I was 2 ½ years old, when a lawn mowing accident took most of my left foot. This accident is my first memory, and I don't remember a life with all ten toes. Despite doubts I could walk/run 'normally' again, as soon as I had a walking cast, I was on the move! I've run 5Ks and played soccer, softball, basketball, and volleyball. Now, I dance, hike, bike, snowshoe, lift weights, and chase my lively 7-year-old.

However, **staying active hasn't been easy. I grew up in an immigrant family without access to many resources, including health insurance or proper prosthetic devices.** From ages 4 to 12, I wore the same ill-fitting, worn-out prosthetic foot (for some perspective: imagine if you had to wear the same pair of shoes from pre-k to puberty). As a first-generation American and first-generation high school and college graduate, it's been a challenge to learn and navigate the healthcare system. Even when I eventually received properly-fitting prosthetics, they weren't designed for my active interests, and I would calibrate my participation to compensate for pain. As an adult, I've requested devices to support my movement, only to be repeatedly denied by insurance and dehumanized in the process.

As an amputee, living an active lifestyle doesn't need to mean training for the Paralympics or athletic competition. Physical activity is a baseline necessity for anyone's physical health and mental wellbeing. SB 699 is not just about devices. It's about promoting health, reducing long-term healthcare costs, and removing barriers to a full and vibrant life. It's about ensuring people with disabilities can thrive.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill so that everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, can access the medical care they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives. Together, let's ensure every *body* has the opportunity to move freely.

Sincerely,



Elizebett Eslinger

Oregon resident: Senate District 20 (Senator Mark Meek); House District 39 (Representative April Dobson)