

Submitter: Katy Gaastra  
On Behalf Of: So Every BODY Can Move - Oregon  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB699

Dear Senate Health Care Committee members,

My name is Katy Gaastra and I'm writing on behalf of many orthotic users here in Oregon, and as the Founder of a nonprofit organization called Cerebral Palsy Strong. I'd like to share my story and why I support SB 699.

I have cerebral palsy or CP, which is a brain injury that occurs during birth that affects muscle tone, balance, and coordination. For me, it mostly shows up in the way that I walk and I have muscle weakness on my left side. In my early 20s, I experienced stress fractures in both of my feet that led to surgery and a lot of bone pain because my recovery didn't go as expected. After my surgeries, I couldn't really 'bounce back' like most young people could and I began to slow down and miss out on all kinds of experiences.

This was extremely hard for me as someone who loves to stay active and lead a busy social life. I questioned my ability to take part in a lot of activities and even had to withdraw from a summer internship due to pain from being on my feet.

Fortunately, not too long after my injuries, I found out about this orthotic device called a dynamic ankle-foot-orthosis, or AFO. When I realized this device could provide pain-relief and so much more, I was ecstatic. But that excitement was cut short when I learned it would not be covered by my insurance.

In response, I launched a GoFundMe campaign that raised thousands of dollars to cover the cost of my AFO. This device has literally carried me through life over the last eight years and into a more certain future.

While I was successful in gaining access, it made me realize that we shouldn't have to rely on charity from our friends to pay for medically necessary equipment. This is what we pay our health insurance companies for. And this is why So Every BODY Can Move exists, so that people like me don't have to know what it's like to feel less than, left out, or less deserving of life-changing health care.

With that, I ask that you support this bill so that people in my community don't have to wonder what their lives would be like if only they had the right tools.

Sincerely, Katy