

Jan 30, 2025

In regards to SB(699)

Position: Support/favor

Dear Senate Health Care Committee,

I am urging you to vote yes on Senate Bill 699 to expand the insurance coverage of orthotic and prosthetic devices. A vote of yes on this bill is *not* a farfetched idea with impossible solutions. It is *not* a new concept or stretch of anyone's imagination. It is simple, and a basic logical thought process should lead to a clear outcome, voting YES. A vote yes on this bill will simply fix a massive lifelong gap in insurance coverage directly impacting the lives of thousands of struggling Oregonians who have been inadequately covered as result of this gap, and therefor inadequately treated medically.

For decades insurance companies have consistently denied coverage of medically necessary devices in the field of orthotics and prosthetics. Patients requiring these services have been neglected for years, left to desperate measures of borrowing money, or turning to "Go fund me" type services in order to fund their medical treatment needs. All while most other medically necessary services seem to be covered as a "no brainer". The need for coverage of orthotics and prosthetics continues to go massively under served despite all the modern studies and evidence pointing to the absolute need to maintain mobility as a basic health function.

I am addressing this committee from the perspective of a career medical professional, a lifelong Oregonian, outdoor enthusiast, lifelong athlete, and longtime user of medically necessary devices, specifically Orthotics. For the sake of argument, I will include some details about my condition and experiences but wish to leave out most of my personal details as this goes to public record and involves my personal health details. I would like to use my personal experiences with the struggle to obtain these life altering treatments, and my combined knowledge in the medical field to help Oregonians get proper insurance coverage in this highly complex area of treating thousands upon thousands of deserving Oregonians. My personal needs can be met with high end ankle foot orthotics (AFO's). With them I am capable not only of summiting mountains, but of working in the fast paced, demanding world of diagnostic medical imaging. These devices support me in maintaining an active lifestyle where I frequently hike, hunt, snowboard, ride ATVs, chase my kids, run errands, cook dinner, do yard work, the list goes on and on, they make me capable of having a busy lifestyle, and help me live a normal life. Without the AFO's, I can barely get to my kitchen, and can barely stand on my own two feet. Insurance companies want you to believe we are adequately covered, but the truth is they are still wildly complicit in only providing the bare minimum of care.

There are people all around us living with addressable needs, but often without the necessary financial support or means to address those needs. Orthotics and prosthetics are often looked upon as a luxury add on, comfort item, or even just regarded as recreational equipment, and as a result we are denied coverage and again deemed "medically unnecessary" by insurance companies. When it is not just an "add on" or "bonus feature" for people with these needs. It should be regarded as a long-term and highly effective medical treatment plan for people with these debilitating conditions. A treatment plan with a proven track record for overall health and wellness. These are people that are capable of living full, active, and productive lives. People with these conditions are capable of earning six figure salaries in the medical field, running companies, serving in the military, working on legislation, being entrepreneurs, raising families, giving back, volunteering, traveling, building houses, running heavy equipment, competing athletically, fighting fires, managing forests, the list goes on and on. They are people wanting to choose life and live it to their best ability. The people of this demographic are often the most highly motivated, driven individuals you will ever meet. They want desperately to get back out into life and just live it, for all the reasons. They are sick and tired of being forced to sit around and dream of what could be, especially when faced with the harsh reality of knowing the solution is available, and they just can't afford it. This is especially painful when a solution is only one major barrier away from being a reality, which is adequate insurance coverage.

Insurance companies barely even cover the bare minimum of orthotic and prosthetic devices necessary for mobility, let alone give approval for the devices that are medically necessary, and advanced enough for the patient's specific needs. People without the means to pay massive out of pocket cost rarely have their needs met. This leaves them highly debilitated, demoralized and often desperate. Members of this underserved demographic of health care

rarely give up trying, however in the meantime they are forced to submit to a much more sedentary lifestyle. This results in poor outcomes causing massive delays of care, in turn leading to a reduction in quality of life, a reduction in mobility, a reduction in effectiveness, and a reduction in productivity. This then leads to an overall increase in disease, hospitalizations, and medical care needs. The patients that are effected then acquire unnecessary medical expenses putting the patient even further from affording proper care, and often leads to new or worsening disorders, this then leads to a significant decrease in life expectancy and over health and wellness. It is a snowball effect with rapid and life threatening consequences.

It is *ridiculous* that today, in January of 2025, with all of our advancements in technology, with decades of research into new methods, new materials, new understandings of the human body, and a whole new level of interconnectedness to reach these innovations from all around the world, that we still see everyday people struggling to get their most basic mobility needs met. It is not for a lack of options or innovation.

Committee members, the technology exists and is readily available for purchase and application. These individuals could come close to fully restoring, if not fulling restoring function back to their lives. I mean come on people, centuries ago pirates figured out how to strap a wooden stick to their leg with a strip of leather and ruled open the seas. I can attest that we have come a long way since then, with highly adaptive new limb and limb support devices. We are Americans in 2025, with a constitutional bill of rights, humanitarian movements, laws, and legislation happening all around the issues of health and access to care. We have Obama care, we pay for insurance, pay taxes, vote and so much more. Oregon is a state that prides itself in being for the people, yet here we are still being treated like filthy pirates. We are forced to find our own solutions and resort to the age-old tactic of just making do with what we have. We are being denied access to a critical aspect of our healthcare needs.

We are fortunate however, that the needs of so many can be met by properly fitted orthotics and or prosthetics. We can treat conditions of all kinds such as limb loss whether from trauma or chronic conditions, limb injuries, limb defects, nerve injuries, spinal cord injuries, reduction in limb use due to stroke or brain injury, and dozens of other debilitating conditions. Conditions that are highly complex and require carefully planned and monitored treatment options. Treatment options that are highly effective in getting people back into a highly functional realm of living and not just surviving with the “bare minimum.” I have been a member of the disabled community for twenty plus years and have personally witnessed a massive boom in the technology and knowledge around the subject. I have subsequently witnessed and experienced a complete lack of access to this technology at crucial times in my life due to questionable insurance practices. We can fix that here today, with a simple vote of YES.

Let’s face it, the medical world is highly complex, and that is because the human body is highly complex beyond our wildest imaginations. What we do know is that it is infinitely interconnected, and a failure to treat one or more body parts is failure to treat the person.

Passing this bill will drastically help the lives of thousands of currently underserved Oregonians. There have been massive advancements in the technology surrounding this industry. Passing this bill will ensure access to the services provided by the dedicated medical professionals in the field of orthotic and prosthetics which will allow for so many to regain and restore, or to have for the first time, a much higher level of function. The type of functionality that is medically necessary to get them back into living life, raising kids, exercising, going back to work, starting a new career, going back to school, living without pain, preventing further injury, and on and on. This will radically improve the lives of thousands of Oregonians; we urge you to bring the standard of care for this demographic of amazing people up to par with the times. Vote yes on SB(699).

Thank you for your time and consideration of the matter,

Jeb Williams RT(R)(CT)(MRI)(ARRT)