

# SB-538 - Tensy's Law

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February 4, 2025,

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Jennifer Murphy, and I am here today in support of Senate Bill 538.

While the passage of SB 91 in 2023 was a pivotal achievement, it is crucial to recognize that many eligible children were left behind due to funding limitations. Senate Bill 538 presents us with another vital opportunity to tackle this funding inequality and ensure that this lifeline of services is readily available to the children deemed eligible by SB 91. These children represent the highest level of support needs in our state, as identified in the annual Oregon Needs Assessment. This bill would allow these children to utilize their Medicaid entitlement for the extraordinary care that is essential for their well-being and development.

Legislators, I urge you to pass this bill. Every eligible child deserves every possible option to ensure that vital care is accessible within the system designed to support them. The systemic barriers currently in place have real and harmful consequences for both children and their families. By dismantling this unjust systemic barrier, we can provide access to the best and most qualified caregivers available. Parents are trained and ready to enter the workforce, and it is important to highlight that as a state, we are still facing significant challenges with workforce shortages. There are simply not enough caregivers available to provide the necessary care. Parent caregivers can play a critical role in bridging this gap for these remarkable children if SB 538 passes.

It has been witnessed how well children thrive when provided with appropriate support, as demonstrated during the temporary program. Please allow these children to grow up with access to the home and community-based services they rightfully deserve. By passing this bill, you will help ensure that families have the choices they need in how to best utilize and receive the assessed services. It has been a hard struggle to get it understood that Oregon budgets only on utilized care and not assessed care. When a child can't utilize the care due to the barriers that the system puts in place, they are deprived of essential services, all while the workforce shortage persists.

It is essential to understand that these home and community-based services allow children to remain in their own communities and homes, with dignity and self-determination, equipping them with the support necessary to reach their full potential. These services also help keep individuals from being forced into institutionalized care.

It is heartbreaking to know that some of these medically fragile children are terminally ill. I strongly believe they should have the opportunity to spend their lives with those who love them, care for them, and provide the extraordinary care they deserve. Families are not begrudged to provide this care; they want to, and they love their children to no end.

Please support SB 538.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Murphy

Winston, Oregon