

Submitter: James Williams  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB538

I am writing to share my experience as a parent to four wonderful children, two of whom have high needs. Parenting is never an easy journey, but raising children with special needs has brought unique challenges and profound impacts on our family.

Our children are all unique individuals, with varying levels of independence and care requirements. Our two children without special needs are fairly independent, attending school and participating in various activities with minimal assistance. In contrast, our two children with high needs require constant care and attention. This contrast in independence is stark and has significantly influenced the dynamics of our family life.

Our son's journey has been particularly challenging. He experienced trauma at birth when he was choked by his own umbilical cord, and in recent years, he has suffered from seizures that require ongoing treatment at OHSU, which is located on the other side of the state. His condition demands frequent medical appointments and specialized care to manage his mental health and behavioral issues, which include aggression towards teachers and peers at school as well as family members at home. He also engages in self-harm and tends to run out of the school building and tries to run out of our home on multiple occasions, adding another layer of complexity to his care.

The strain of managing these extensive medical needs and the emotional toll on our son, who faces these challenges daily, has been overwhelming for our entire family. The constant worry and stress have taken a toll on my health and mental well-being, as well as that of my other children. Despite our best efforts to support each other, the emotional and physical exhaustion is profound.

Due to the increasing demands of my son's care, I had no choice but to quit my job. This decision, while necessary for our family's immediate well-being, has placed us under severe financial strain. Without my income, we struggle to meet our financial obligations, and the burden of medical appointments only compounds this hardship. It has made it difficult for both parents to work, with only one being able to manage a job due to the constant 24 hours care that our autistic sons need.

I strongly believe that parents in our situation should be able to access benefits from SB538. Such support would alleviate the financial hardships that come with caring for children with high needs, allowing us to focus on providing the best possible care for our children without the constant stress of financial insecurity. The financial

assistance provided by SB538 would enable our family to support our autistic children in a much more consistent reliable way.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our experience. I hope our story helps to highlight the urgent need for additional support for families like ours. Your consideration and assistance in this matter would be deeply appreciated.