To: Senate Committee on Healthcare

From: Anthony Castaneda, SEIU 503

Date: February 4, 2025

RE: SEIU in support of SB 538 Tensy's Law

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee,

My name is Anthony Castaneda, and I am writing in support of SB 538 on behalf of SEIU 503 to expand access to care for children with high medical and behavioral needs. This bill would allow parents, who know the needs of their children best, to be paid care providers as personal support workers.

Nationally and in our state, parents have long struggled to find adequate in-home care for minor children with complex medical and behavioral needs. In part due to a workforce shortage and limited funding, many families are unable to hire qualified caregivers to fill their child's care hours. This forces many parents to fill this gap by providing this care themselves, without compensation, sacrificing other job opportunities to do so. The need to fill the care gap also means that parents need to make tough daily economic choices to make ends meet while providing care to their children.

Under the current care system, parents of disabled adults are permitted to be paid caregivers; however, this option isn't available to children, leaving many young families with impossible choices. As a consequence, parents are forced to wait until the children age into adulthood though early childhood is one of the most important periods in a child's development.

In 2023, Oregon passed SB 91, which created the Children's Extraordinary Needs (CEN) waiver, to allow parents of children with very high medical/behavioral needs to be paid as caregivers. SB 538 would expand access to eligible children and parent caregivers in the CEN waiver program and would also allow parents of minor children to be personal support workers.

SB 538 moves the state in the right direction by tapping into an existing workforce to provide care to children with extraordinary needs. Please support SB 538.

Thank you for time and consideration,

Anthony Castaneda