



Oregon
Community
Brokerages

February 4, 2025

To: Sen. Patterson, Chair, Senate Committee on Health Care
From: Katie Rose, Executive Director, Oregon Community Brokerages
RE: SB 538, expanding the limits and conditions by which parents of minor children with
IDD may be paid for their attendant care

Oregon Community Brokerages is an association of the 14 Support Services Brokerages currently operating across the state of Oregon. We serve nearly 8,000 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) living in their own or family homes, providing them with the case management and supports needed to connect them to community resources and direct service providers where they live.

We all want children with IDD to have ample, well-paid, well-trained support options to nurture their abilities to grow while safely supported. We want their family members to have their own needs met, remaining whole in the roles they play in family life. We have not yet built the provider landscape we need for this shared goal. In that absence, we are left trying to find other solutions to fill the urgent needs of the community. SB 538 looks to address the legitimate unmet needs of families of children with IDD by expanding their ability to be paid for their care. We offer the following comments from a neutral bill position.

The Brokerage service community has over 20 years of experience supporting and assisting adults with IDD to navigate paid service relationships with their parents. Parents are sometimes the safest and best solution to a person's in-home care needs. There are also potential risks when paying parents as support providers, including isolation and a loss of self-determination. We also know that when people with IDD are not able to access the direct service providers needed to meet their assessed needs it adds stress to the family unit.

Paying parents to care for their children changes both the families who use this policy and the IDD service system itself. What we appreciated about 2023's SB 91 is that it created the necessary structure and accountability measures to support positive results while introducing this service into the system. The areas we praised in testimony included commonsense limits on the service, including limits on how many hours may

be allocated to a parent provider, and disallowing employer-employee relationships from immediate family members. We believe these remain valuable aspects of the service structure.

Direct Support Professionals are different from Personal Support Workers. DSPs are employed directly by an agency, while PSWs are employed by a person with IDD, their legal guardian, or their designee. An agency supervisor may support a parent provider when they need it, and they ensure that DSPs remain in alignment with the mainstream of disability services. Without that outside input, a family does not have the same support or feedback. With the risk of isolation high for families supporting children with high-need disabilities, we believe that the current limitations on paid parent providers as DSPs is appropriate.

There is a shortage of qualified, available direct care providers that is negatively impacting families and individuals with IDD here in Oregon and across the nation. To support healthy dynamics and positive outcomes in these services, we must:

Continue to Address the Root Issue—a Lack of Provider Capacity.

Children and families entered the in-home service sphere with the K Plan, which expanded Oregon's use of in-home services. The available workforce has never been able to grow to fully meet this demand. In addition to tasking the system with the intentional work of developing provider capacity, we need to adequately fund provider agencies to hire and retain high-quality DSPs and continue to raise PSW compensation in pace with the economy.

Create Policy to Expand the Use of Technology as an Alternative to Paid 1:1 Support.

The data around the direct support workforce crisis tells us that there simply are not enough humans to fill the growing need for direct support, no matter the fiscal investment. Looking to technological advancements in assistance with daily living is the creative way forward in the face of this challenge.

Oregon Community Brokerages respectfully submits these ideas and observations in consideration of SB 538. We must apply our shared values not only to the needs of the present, but to the future. Guiding Oregon families to the best outcomes when paying parents of minor children for their support requires mindful safeguards to navigate the issues and find the best way forward.