

Submitter: John Curtis
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB20

My name is John Curtis. I am severely disabled.

My business and career failed because I could not afford to pay for it AND for my caregivers, health insurance, medicine and medical equipment. So, I gave up on working and took disability retirement.

Many younger people with disabilities who I know are in that same leaky boat. They depend on the Oregon Health Plan to pay for expensive medicine, doctors, surgeries and wheelchairs. Several need caregivers paid for by APD. They want to work. But they dare not do so. For if they do, the services they need to survive could stop. Those who take that risk and do work must not save and they must take lower paying jobs. For most, the risk of losing benefits is simply not worth it. Yet virtually every person with disabilities I know wants to be involved in and contribute to their community and pay Oregon something back for what it provides them. So many of them have incredible educations, talents and skills.

There is a work incentive program conceived in the earlier Bush Administration that allows working people with disabilities to "buy-in" to continue receiving federal benefits by paying a monthly premium. But there are limits to how much one can earn and save. Oregon's version of this program is called the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD).

Individuals and their allies have banded together to change EPD's income and resource limits so that participants can have earnings that will support them and to be able to save for unanticipated expenses and down payments for cars and homes. They could have all of these if the EPD rules relax. This is their proposal to the Oregon Legislature. Please support SB 20.

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