



February 11, 2025

Senate Committee on Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 20

Dear Senator Gelser, Representative Nosse, and Senator Broadman

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 20 and to urge its passage. As the Executive Director of Talent Maker City, a rural, nonprofit community makerspace that serves marginalized youth, low-income adults, local businesses, and individuals with accessibility challenges, I have seen firsthand how current Medicaid asset and income eligibility restrictions create significant barriers for people with disabilities who wish to engage in meaningful employment.

We always strive to employ a diverse and skilled group of instructors who bring lived experience and expertise to our community. Many individuals with disabilities make exceptional instructors, offering invaluable knowledge about navigating barriers to resources and services. However, despite having the funding to fairly compensate these individuals, we are unable to do so without jeopardizing their access to essential benefits.

For example, our partnership with the Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection (OSCI) has fostered meaningful relationships with highly skilled individuals who are wheelchair users and possess expertise in woodworking, welding, and sewing. These individuals are exceptionally qualified to serve as instructors in our makerspace. However, due to Medicaid's asset and income limitations, we are unable to hire them at competitive wages without jeopardizing their essential healthcare benefits. This restrictive policy limits their employment opportunities and prevents our organization from hiring some of the most qualified candidates in their respective fields.

Beyond harming individuals, this policy also negatively impacts organizations like ours by shrinking the talent pool of potential instructors. We are unable to hire highly qualified candidates simply because the current system discourages people with disabilities from working in roles that allow them to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

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By supporting Senate Bill 20, you will help create employment equity for Oregonians with disabilities and open new opportunities for financial independence, professional growth, and community innovation. This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring that all Oregonians, regardless of ability, have the opportunity to earn a living wage without fear of losing essential benefits.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 20 and remove these unnecessary barriers to employment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Allison French

Executive Director

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