

Submitter: James Lee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB20

Dear Oregon Decision-Makers,

I am writing to express my strong support for expanding the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program and to share how this policy impacts individuals like me and so many others in the disability community. As a C-5 quadriplegic, I have firsthand experience with the difficult choices people with disabilities face when it comes to employment and maintaining essential benefits.

The current EPD program is a lifeline for Medicaid recipients who want to work while keeping access to in-home care and healthcare services. The proposed changes—removing the income and resource limits—would finally allow people with disabilities to build careers, take promotions, and even step into leadership roles without the fear of losing the care they rely on to live independently.

Many people with disabilities, including myself, are highly educated, skilled, and passionate about working. However, the system often forces us to remain underemployed or unemployed because earning too much means losing critical benefits. The cost of in-home care alone exceeds what most people with disabilities can earn, making it impossible to work full-time without severe financial consequences. No one should have to choose between paying rent and paying for the care they need just to survive.

Expanding EPD isn't just good for individuals with disabilities—it benefits Oregon as a whole:

- People with disabilities who work are healthier, leading to lower long-term healthcare costs.
- We contribute to the workforce in much-needed areas across nearly every profession.
- With the ability to save money, we can plan for emergencies, retirement, and even homeownership, reducing reliance on government programs.
- EPD participants pay into the system through Medicaid buy-in and taxes, offsetting costs.
- Employer-sponsored healthcare and other benefits reduce the amount the state needs to spend on medical expenses.
- Case managers would see a lighter workload, allowing resources to be allocated more efficiently.

By making these changes, Oregon has an opportunity to foster a more inclusive

workforce and show that diversity, including disability inclusion, strengthens our economy and society. People with disabilities are eager to work, contribute, and thrive—but we need policies that support, not hinder, our ability to do so.

I urge you to support the expansion of EPD and remove the income and resource limits. This change will give people like me the freedom to build meaningful careers without sacrificing the care that keeps us alive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.