

## **Written Testimony for SB20 - Oregon State Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

I am writing to express my support regarding SB20, a bill that proposes to require the Department of Human Services to administer a program to provide medical assistance to employed individuals with disabilities without regard to the individuals' income or resources.

As a resident of Oregon, an employee of Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection, and an adult child of someone with a spinal cord injury, I understand how ableism is often perpetuated under the guise of fiscal responsibility. The asset and income restrictions for people who are disabled is a perfect example of this. Many people lose their sense of identity after an injury and their mental and physical health suffers. Allowing these fellow Oregonians to work without restrictions often enables them to rebuild their independence and identity. It allows them to contribute to society in a meaningful way. Additionally, employment is often a sign of someone who is adjusting to their spinal cord injury and reintegrating to society. Individuals who adjust well after spinal cord injury tend to have better health outcomes which ultimately costs the system less. Work is therapy in many ways.

There are many people on our staff at Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection who struggle with income and asset restrictions. I have had many personal conversations with my colleagues about the impact this has on their life and their mental and physical health. They all want to do more and give back to their communities, but are stifled by the income restrictions. We have a staff member who has not had a pay increase in

years because they can't accept it or they would lose benefits. They feel stuck and don't see any way to improve their situation. Because of the secondary health conditions that often accompany spinal cord injury - pressure sores, incontinence, bowel control, physical therapy, and more - they need their medical coverage and OHP is the only real option for them. The current income and asset restrictions leave them stuck.

I urge the committee members to support the passage of SB20. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Waller  
Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection