

Submitter: Michael Steen

Date: February 17, 2025

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB20

To: Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of Oregon Senate Bill 20. If passed, the Bill would dramatically improve opportunities for people with disabilities to realize personal success and determination, both in the immediate and long term as financial goals can then be established. Further, the individual will have increased opportunities for active community participation and engaged citizenship with elimination of income limits and asset limits.

While I understand the initial premise behind income and asset restrictions was for judicious use of public resources, the limits have created undue hardships as other public safety net programs have diminished. The reduced programs have resulted in even greater necessity that the individual has ability to earn a living wage that their skillset allows and accumulate assets without sacrificing necessary healthcare services that we all need to live our best lives.

Under the Employed with Disabilities Program, individuals with disabilities are essentially forced to either accept a job that is below their skillset and forgo their ability to save for life goals (i.e, entrepreneurship, having a family or even building a modest retirement nest egg) or go without healthcare coverage (which may or may not be available through their employer) and long term services and supports, which typically are not accessible at affordable rates outside of Medicaid. The long-term services are essential so that individuals can live independently and remain active community participants. Active participation in society absolutely reduces mental stress, creates stronger community bonds and lessens the impact that the person's disability would otherwise have.

Resulting from birth complications, I do experience cerebral palsy myself. Through hard work and a few amazing supports systems, I have remained gainfully employed for over 25 years with health care benefits from my employers. The impacts of my disability are relatively minor, such that I have not needed long term supports and services. Though if I did (or if that day comes), I would very much want to live in a State where those services would be available without sacrificing the bonds I've formed through my career pursuits, community groups that I've engaged with and various non-profits I've contributed to in service and financially.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Michael Steen

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