

February 18, 2025

State of Oregon Legislature
Attn: Chair Gelser Blouin
Senate Committee on Human Services

RE: Letter of Support, SB 20

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 20 S to remove the income and resource eligibility thresholds for the Employed People with Disabilities program. These vital changes enables Oregonians living and working with disabilities to thrive instead of forcing terrible choices between their livelihood and their care.

Senate Bill 20 is an equitable solution to the systemic employment and health equity barriers presently in place for workers with disabilities. All benefits that others receive from employment would be available to them. Permitting them to continue receiving Medicaid benefits while working allows them to choose careers with a steady income and to live independently with dignity, choice, and good health- and ultimately build stronger and healthier communities.

Here's why we need this change:

- **Enables people with disabilities to build a career and contribute to society.** Many people with disabilities want to work but can't because they will lose their benefits despite being highly educated, skilled at their profession, and motivated and passionate about their profession. With these changes, participants will be able to take promotions, pursue leadership and management positions, and reach their professional potential. These workers also contribute to Oregon's competitiveness. Studies have also shown higher income means healthier lifestyle and less health problems for participants, and create a more diverse, reflected workforce.
- **Stops forcing disempowering choices on people.** The cost of in-home care exceeds the amount of money that most people with disabilities can earn, putting them in a situation where they need to choose between paying the rent and paying for their care. People with disabilities that work are healthier and have fewer health related costs, able to save for emergencies, retirement, even buy a home. They are also adding to the skill and diversity of our workforce in needed areas, across nearly all professions.
- **Good for Oregon's bottom line.** Along with being good for the people who are disabled and working, it is good for society and cheaper for Oregon and the United States. EPD participants pay into the system through Medicaid buy-in, offsetting some costs that

come at a critical time for Oregon. Participants also pay taxes, and often employer sponsored healthcare, and other benefits, reduce the amount that the state needs to pay for medical insurance, deductibles, and other supplies. EPD case manager workload will be substantially less which frees them to do other valuable work in other parts of the system.

For all these reasons, I strongly encourage your support of Senate Bill 20. Thank you for considering this important proposed legislation. We look forward to the positive impact it will provide on the lives of Oregonians living and working with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carmen Rubio".

Carmen Rubio
Portland, Oregon