

Submitter: Lisa Thomas
On Behalf Of: na
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB20

Testimony in Support of SB20 Bill

My name is Lisa Thomas, and I am 43 years old from Salem, Oregon. I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis when I was just two years old. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to speak today in support of the SB20 bill. This bill would have life-changing impacts not only myself but also countless others who work full-time jobs or would like to work full-time while managing a life with disabilities.

Living with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis has presented me with numerous challenges throughout my life. Daily tasks that many people take for granted, such as showering, getting dressed, and even cooking a meal have never been something I can do on my own. Without daily assistance I am literally stranded. Despite these challenges, I have always strived to live the most normal and fulfilling life I can. Working a full-time job for the past 23 years of my life has had a significant impact on that.

From my experience here are some things I want to bring to your attention:

- **MENTAL HEALTH:** Living in a world where you have no option but to rely on help from others to accomplish the simplest tasks can be incredibly challenging. However, being able to be productive, earn your own money, pay your bills, and engage with others has a profound impact on mental health. It gives those out in the community purpose, connection and fulfillment. A life without purpose leads to a life lived in darkness. I can tell you firsthand from my experience that working truly brings me happiness.
- **I STILL NEED HELP:** Whether I work or not, doesn't change the fact that I still require reliable daily assistance just to live. What it does change is the fact that I am saving the government money by paying for my own bills while also paying taxes. It makes no sense to me that the state or government wouldn't want to help those who work full time jobs & seek to live the most normal lives they can.
- **LIVING COSTS:** In today's economy, achieving self-sufficiency has become increasingly difficult for everyone, whether they have disabilities or not. The additional expense for a couple of hours of daily help that I require makes it even more challenging. I feel penalized for choosing to work, for not wanting to rely fully on government assistance to pay my bills, and for wanting to contribute to society. Despite my long-standing career and strong work ethic, these very qualities are seen as disqualifications, preventing me from getting the daily help I need.

This bill will change that!

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.