



Tina Meier-Nowell
5825 NE Ray Cir.
Hillsboro, OR 97124
cmeier@nwresd.k12.or.us
(W) 503-614-1310
(C) 971-205-2477

2.24.25

Dear Honorable Human Service Committee Members,

I am writing to express my full support for Senate Bill 909 and its critical role in ensuring timely and effective implementation of services for children with serious emotional disturbances (SED) in Oregon. For too long, our state has fallen short in delivering the promised services and support for children with SED. This bill is not just a step forward; it is a necessary leap toward fulfilling the commitments Oregon made over a decade ago to provide equitable care for our most vulnerable children.

As a special education administrator, I've witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of the state's failure to fully implement the promised services. While previous efforts such as The Culture of Yes, Senate Bill 820, and Senate Bill 1557 have laid the groundwork, the promise of accessible, home and community-based services (HCBS) remains largely unfulfilled. Year after year, families in Oregon continue to struggle without the care their children are entitled to. This has been incredibly disheartening, and it has only deepened the urgency for change.

Senate Bill 909 is essential to breaking through this stagnation and ensuring that children with SED receive the services they need without further delays. The bill's focus on enforcing the implementation of HCBS is a necessary move in realizing the legislative promises made under previous bills. However, beyond the structural aspects, SB 909 brings us back to the core values that should guide our system: dignity, respect, collaboration, and the inclusion of families as true partners in decision-making.

The failure to adequately engage families and youth in the process has been another point of concern. Despite efforts to involve advocates and families through contracts and outreach programs, Oregon's approach has often felt selective, leaving out many who have been at the forefront of advocacy for years. Additionally, there has been a lack of transparency in the process, with critical reports and documents delayed or withheld. This lack of clear communication has compounded the frustration of families who are waiting for services that have already been promised.

SB 909 not only addresses the need for timely implementation, but it also highlights a critical policy issue—Medicaid eligibility and parental income disregard. Many families with children requiring hospital-level care and those facing serious emotional disturbances are currently unable to access essential services due to income-based eligibility restrictions. Extending parental income disregard under Medicaid to include these children is a crucial step toward equitable access to care. This will ensure that more children can receive the support they need without their families facing undue financial hardship. The federal Medicaid match further makes this an important and sustainable investment for Oregon.

I urge you to support SB 909 as a step toward fulfilling Oregon's promise to its children and families. It is time to move beyond the delays, bureaucracy, and inaction and create a system that delivers on its commitments. It is time for the Culture of Yes to become the Culture of Now.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I appreciate your leadership in moving this legislation forward and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on the children and families of Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Meier-Howell".

cmeier@nwresd.k12.or.us

503-614-1310