

Submitter: Jennifer Murphy

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

I am submitting testimony to you all today to emphasize the critical need for fully funding attendant care services for children with disabilities and expanding the Children's Essential Needs (CEN) waiver to cover ALL eligible children in Oregon. As you may know, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) has presented its budget for the upcoming biennium, and while there are many necessary priorities to consider, I strongly urge you to ensure that the needs of the highest-level of care children chosen by SB91 -2023 with disabilities are fully addressed in this funding.

Attendant care is a lifeline for many families who have children with disabilities. For these families, access to appropriate care can make the difference between a child being able to remain at home with their loved ones or being placed in a foster setting. The current funding is not sufficient to meet the known eligible children who rely on these essential services for the CEN waiver and are sitting on a waitlist.

Furthermore, expanding the CEN waiver to include ALL eligible children is a step that can greatly enhance the quality of life for these children and their families. Many children who would benefit from the waiver currently do not have access to the services they need because the waiver is limited to the funding of 155 spots and over 1300 remain on a wait list. Funding the known eligible kids on the waiver will provide critical home and community-based services.

The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. We have an obligation to ensure that every child in Oregon, regardless of their disability, has the opportunity to grow, learn, and live in the most supportive and inclusive environment possible. The least restrictive environment as possible. Expanding the CEN waiver and fully funding attendant care services is a step toward fulfilling this promise. Promises made should be promises kept.

I respectfully request that you advocate for increased funding for attendant care and for the expansion of the CEN waiver to ensure that all eligible children with disabilities can access the care and services they deserve. Your leadership and commitment to this issue will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of children with disabilities and their families across our state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your support and to seeing Oregon continue to lead the way in supporting children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Murphy
Winston, Oregon