

Pete Denman

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Intel Corporation
28 SE 28th Ave.
Portland, OR 97214
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Ways and Means Committee
Oregon State Legislature

Re: SB 20

Senators and representatives I'm here to testify in behalf of Disability Health and Employment Equity Coalition

I am Pete Denman, a fourth-generation Oregonian, and I have been quadriplegic since a spinal cord injury I sustained at the age of 20 at Kelly Pointe Park, where the Willamette and Columbia Rivers meet. Now at nearly 57, I have spent decades in a wheelchair, observing significant shifts in the perception and treatment of disabilities. My journey has provided me with profound insights into disability programs and public attitudes. Today, I wish to share my experiences with the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program, highlighting both its support and its limitations, and the potential impact of updating this bill.

My journey with disability has parallel some very significant changes to how we think about and treat people with disabilities. The ADA was established right after I was injured, vocational rehab rehabilitation was revitalized right when I started college and the ticket to work program which enables the EPD program was put into place right after I graduated from college. All of these things have allowed me to gain some success, but with limitations that have slowed me down.

While the EPD program has enabled me to achieve numerous milestones, it has also imposed limitations on my progress. I will illustrate my experiences and the shortcomings of the program through a few graphs:

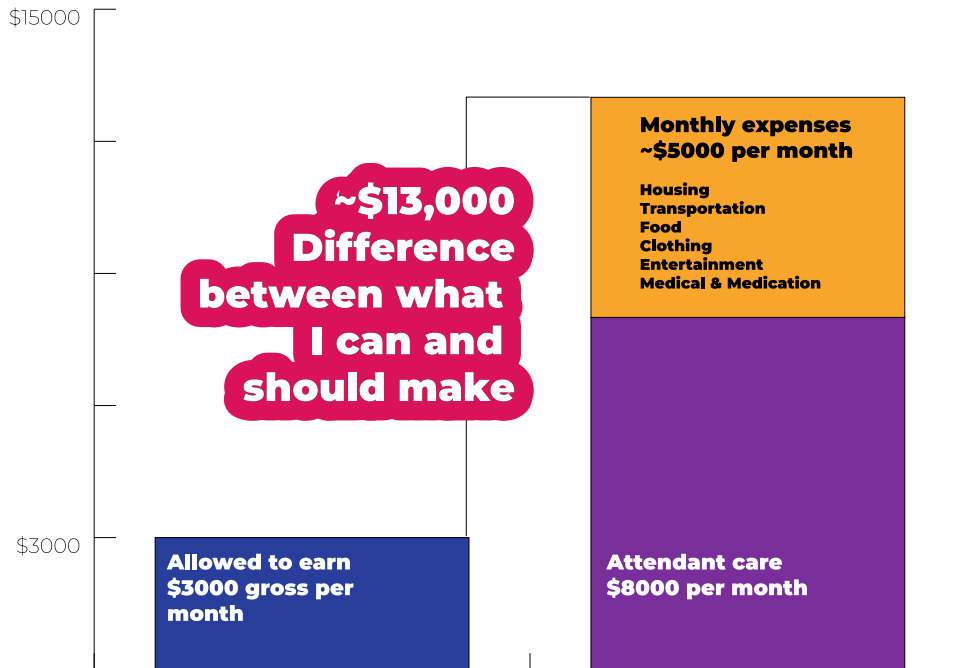
1. The first chart illustrates my current earnings cap compared to my actual living expenses. The gap between what I can make and what I need to make only gets worse the more disabled a person is. This program doesn't account for that. Someone who only needs a small amount of care could easily find a job that could pay for that but somebody like myself requires significant amounts of care really doesn't have a chance.
2. Everyone needs a financial safety net for emergencies, such as health issues or job loss. Financial advisors typically recommend saving enough to cover three to six months of expenses. However, as shown in the second graphic, individuals are only allowed to save \$5,000, which is inadequate given my living costs.
3. The final graph compares the impact of employment against unemployment. It highlights my monthly contributions to the tax base

while working versus the assistance I would require when not working, using average figures to illustrate the disparity.

As you can see, I take great pride in being both an Oregonian and an American. Oregon, along with the broader United States, has long been a leader in advocating for civil rights and creating opportunities through the programs I've discussed today. I hope that Oregon can once again take the lead, joining other states that have already embraced this vision. By doing so, we can demonstrate to the nation and the world that individuals with disabilities have so much to contribute. Supporting these individuals not only reduces or eliminates the costs associated with their care, but also enables them to live purposeful lives, maintain better health, and generate wealth for themselves and their communities.

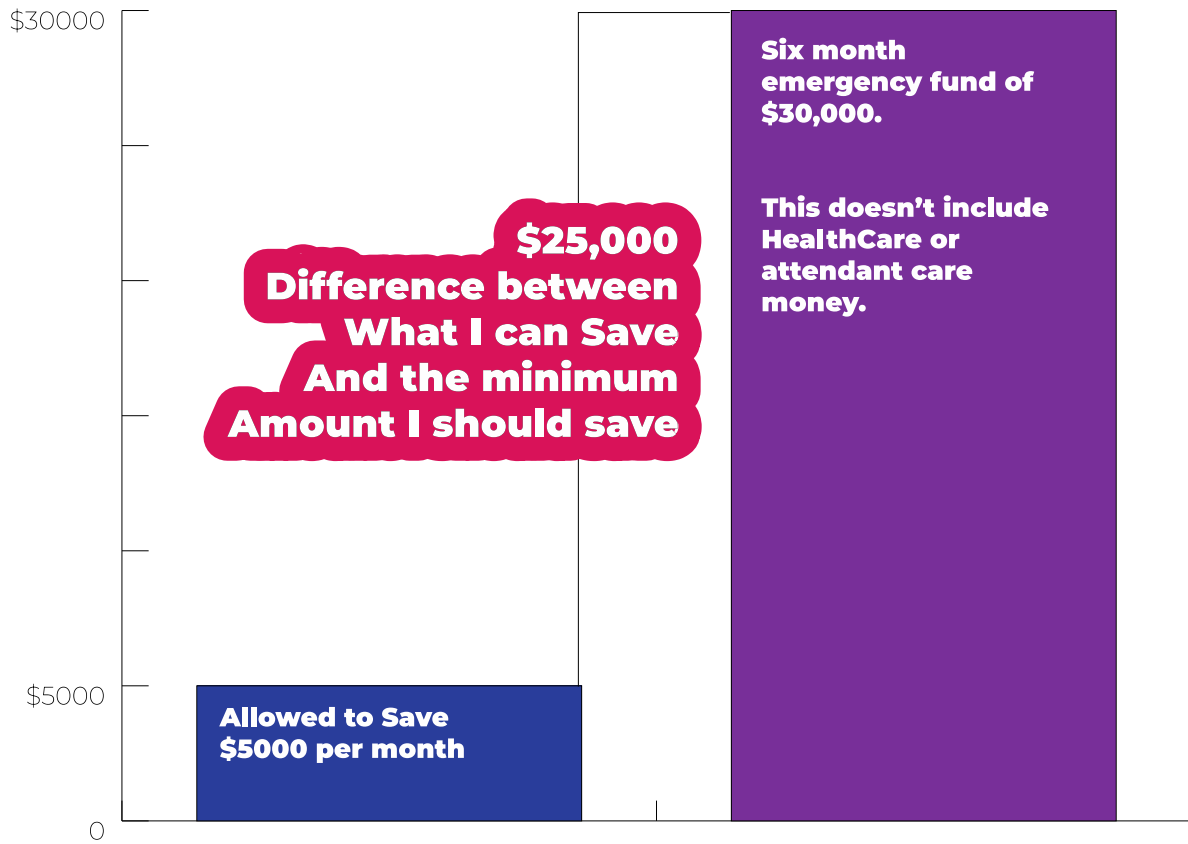
In conclusion, there is a concept called, Universal Design. This concept ensures that everyone can benefit from the same features of a given space or item. For instance, where there were once steps, we now have ramps, thanks to the ADA. This allows mothers with strollers, people with shopping carts, cyclists, and scooter users to access the same areas as those using wheelchairs, often without anyone noticing the difference. With the ADA and initiatives like the Ticket to Work, and vocational rehabilitation, we've created ramps of opportunity; now we just need to open the door at the top of the ramp and allow everyone to thrive. Thank you for your attention.

**Allowed to earn approximately \$3000 per month
need approximately \$13,000 per month**



Support SB 20

Not allowed to save money for anything other than retirement



Support SB 20

Amount of Government Assistance Needed, Monthly Support SB 20

