

Submitter: Ian Ruder

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

April 3, 2025

Dear Committee Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and fellow members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services,

I am providing this testimony in support of SB20 being fully funded within ODHS's budget. I urge you to support SB20 and the thousands of disabled Oregonians who would benefit from removing asset and income eligibility caps on Medicaid. I can confidently say there are thousands, because as a quadriplegic power wheelchair user I am one of them. Additionally, in my work as editor of a magazine for active wheelchair users I am constantly meeting amazing individuals who want nothing more than to work a meaningful job and support themselves but are afraid to sacrifice the medical supports and services they depend on to do so.

The caps disincentivize motivated people from even considering going to or returning to work and attaining a level of financial security where they don't need state help—why try to be successful if you know that our state rewards a certain level of financial success with stripping away the very supports and services that enabled your success? It's the depressing catch-22 so many of us with disabilities deal with every day.

I found myself in this very position 15 years ago, and was forced to decide whether I wanted to continue working part-time and remain eligible for the care and services I needed or accept an exciting full-time job whose salary would put me over the eligibility caps. I chose the latter, but I only felt comfortable doing so because I had some money that had been set aside when I was paralyzed as a teenager. Even with a cushion, the prospect of losing my eligibility was frightening, so I can only imagine how the majority of Oregonians feel when confronting this choice.

Trapping disabled people in a subsistence relationship with government benefits is an outdated practice that benefits neither side. Removing income eligibility caps is an overdue remedy that will allow disabled people to pursue their dreams and true financial independence without the fear of compromising their health and becoming a burden to the state. I hope you will empower disabled Oregonians and support SB20.

Ian Ruder

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