



Address: 4181 E Street, Springfield, OR 97478
Phone: 541-343-5256
Email: info@arclane.org
Web: www.arclane.org

April 4, 2025

Dear Senate Committee on Human Services:

My name is Laura Dahill, and I work with The Arc Lane County, a nonprofit that provides supports and services to people who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Arc Lane County was awarded a grant in 2023 by the Lane County System of Care to provide respite care to children with developmental disabilities, mental health and behavioral health concerns, and to date, we have provided care to more than 294 children and their siblings.

I am writing to express my support of SB 1197, which would allow the Oregon Health Authority to expand respite services for people who care for a young person (aged 25 and under) who has a complex behavioral health (such as mental illness or substance use/addiction) condition and/or intellectual/developmental disability.

Respite services are important as they strengthen Oregon families and provide quality experiences that allow youth to learn valuable social emotional skills. During The Arc's respite programs, we have witnessed many beautiful moments of non-disabled youth learning from others who are neurodiverse, and it is a beautiful model with youth learning about diversity, social acceptance and inclusion.

Not only do children benefit, but parents do as well. Parents raising children with exceptionalities need time to refill their cup, so they have the capacity and patience to continue with the demands of caregiving for their loved ones. The respite program allows parents to take time for self-care so they can be better – better to themselves, better for their children and better for their families.

As a parent of a youth who experiences autism, I can speak firsthand to the need for respite for parents. Parenting in general is hard, but parenting our most vulnerable citizens requires constant, laser-focused supervision. Parents of children with developmental disabilities, mental health and behavioral health concerns, need and deserve respite to be effective in their role as primary caregivers for their children.

I urge you to support SB 1197 to help strengthen Oregon families and keep Oregon families together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Laura Dahill'.

Laura Dahill,
Director of Marketing & Communications