

7 April 2025

Dear Senate Committee on Human Services:

My name is Lesli Takasugi and I am the proud mother of a thirteen year-old girl who experiences Down Syndrome.

Respite services have been life-saving for us, first enabling me to work and support her as a single mother, and now as her step-father and I navigate raising her to be the happiest, most balanced and independent person she can be.

All children require an enormous amount of attention, and all parents need to recharge every now and then. However, children who experience special needs can add extra challenges to the mix, making respite for the parents that much more necessary and valuable.

My daughter Mukti has been the joy of life, but she has also been very challenging at times. Because she is non-verbal, she can become frustrated when not understood, frustration often leading to behavioural problems. Respite services for our family have enabled us to create a "Team Mukti" of strong, intelligent and compassionate caregivers who know how to communicate with her and offer her the emotional support she is often craving. Thanks to her participation in programs at The Arc Lane County, she has met some of the best caregivers we've ever had. They have opened her up to going out into the community and socializing, both experiences that are vital and enriching for all. They've allowed us to work, as well as rest and recharge, both things that are necessary for our own well-being. If we, the parents, aren't balanced, healthy and thriving, there is no way our daughter will be.

We are requesting your support for SB 1197, which would require respite care services to be provided through the state medical assistance program. This bill will continue to benefit families like mine, as well as families who have children with mental health and behavioural health concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this important investment. Please support the people who are taking care of the most vulnerable in our community and help strengthen Oregon families.

Sincerely,
Lesli Takasugi