

Submitter: Hayley Palmer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

My name is Hayley Palmer, I am writing in support of SB 538 or Tensys Law, because it addresses a critical gap in our caregiving system. I think it spoke volumes to see an entire hearing room full of parents and their disabled children, fighting to be compensated for appropriate care given to their children, as well as DSP's and the adult individuals they serve, asking for better pay. The unpaid care that we provide as parents is ABOVE AND BEYOND. The care the DSP's provide is also ABOVE AND BEYOND. The state needs to take care of it's most vulnerable individuals and the people guiding them through life every minute of the day.

I first want to acknowledge how hard Oregon has worked to strengthen the caregiver workforce, but the shortage still persists; especially for children with complex medical and behavioral needs.

However, the most qualified, reliable workforce is already here: the parents who provide this exceptional level of care every day, unpaid. Oregon offers various home care services for older adults and people with disabilities, including Medicaid-based programs that allow spouses to be paid caregivers. Why are children with the highest needs in the state the only population being discriminated against?

I understand the concern that SB 538 could become costly over time. However, it's important to recognize that this bill does not create new services or add additional costs. The care hours have already been approved and budgeted for. The only difference is ensuring that when PARENTS step in to provide the care due to workforce shortages, they are compensated—just as any untrained, 18 year old, felony free person could be.

Finally, while the concern about long-term costs is understandable, I would ask you this: If Oregon suddenly had enough caregivers to fill all approved care hours, would the state then argue that it's become too expensive to provide the services these children were already deemed eligible for? Of course not. The services are already part of the budget—the only difference is ensuring they are actually delivered, regardless of WHO provides them.

SB 538 is about fairness, equality, and stability. It ensures children receive the care they are entitled to while allowing parents to sustain their families financially.

Tensy's law is endorsed by the following organizations:

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Service Employees International Union
National Alliance on Mental Illness
System of Care Advisory Council
Autism Society Oregon
United Cerebral Palsy OR
Oregon Association for Home Care
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
Family Forward Oregon
Oregon Pediatric Society
Our Children Oregon
OR School Nurses Association
OR Nurses Association

We urge you to follow suit.