

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

My name is Sonja Stevenson, and I am writing to you today to ask you to remove the ban on paying parents as care workers so that very high needs children with disabilities can access the Medicaid services they are already entitled to.

Oregon has promised these children a way to be served in their homes and communities, instead of in institutions. But for more than 10 years, those services have never been able to be fully utilized, sometimes to devastating effects.

My non-verbal son is 12 years old, weighs 150 pounds and is five foot ten. He is very strong and it's frequently a challenge for others to understand what he is trying to communicate. This often ends in extreme agitation and dysregulation. I worry for his and his caregivers safety when he is in the care of others.

The only reason Tensy's Law, SB 538, is considered to have an additional cost is because of the state's failure to provide a functional home care system. By refusing to recognize parents of minors as part of the home care workforce, the state is making it harder for children to get the support they need.

Paying parents for the care work they do in lieu of their own careers is a simple, cost-effective solution to many problems. It ensures children receive consistent, high-quality care from the people who know them best and stabilizes families in their own homes.

We know this works. During the temporary COVID-19 allowance, Oregon families reported that their disabled children were healthier, happier, and making progress. The stability and continuity of care made a real difference. You have the power to make that positive change permanent.

Oregon has taken steps in the right direction, but the system remains inefficient and restrictive. It's time to trust families. It's time to remove outdated barriers. It's time to fix this system and follow through on the promises made to our children.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sonja Stevenson