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On Behalf Of:
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Families caring for children with significant disabilities often find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, not because they lack the will to work, but because the demands of caregiving make traditional employment impossible. Many parents are forced to leave the workforce entirely to meet their child's intensive daily needs, from managing feeding tubes to assisting with mobility and administering medications. Without income, these families must turn to public assistance programs to survive. Senate Bill 538 (Tensy's Law) offers a proactive solution. It provides a pathway to earned income and reduces families' dependence on programs like SNAP, TANF, and housing assistance by allowing parents to be paid caregivers for their medically fragile children. Instead of pushing families into deeper poverty, this bill supports self-sufficiency and will enable parents to contribute economically while continuing to meet their children's essential needs.

This approach isn't just suitable for families—it's fiscally responsible for the state. Public benefits often come from multiple funding streams with complex administrative overhead. In contrast, SB 538 leverages the existing Medicaid structure to compensate parents for care they are already providing. Doing so offsets the need for broader public assistance and helps families stabilize financially over the long term.

It's important to understand that this policy doesn't create a new benefit—it ensures that the services already authorized under Medicaid are delivered. Parents should be allowed to step in and be fairly compensated when no professional workers are available. Doing so recognizes the value of their labor and restores dignity to families forced to rely on a patchwork of aid just to get by.

SB 538 is an innovative, efficient, and compassionate investment in Oregon families. Let's reduce dependency by empowering those already doing the most challenging work.