

Submitter:

Amelia Arneson

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB5006

Chair Lieber, Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,
I'm here to support SB 538, Tensy's Law, from the perspective of caregiver mental health.

Behind every child with complex medical or developmental needs is often a parent who is operating around the clock—providing intensive care, managing appointments, coordinating services, and advocating within systems that were never built with their child in mind. These caregivers are not just tired. Many are in crisis. Research shows that caregivers of children with significant disabilities experience dramatically higher rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout. And yet, in Oregon, we're asking these parents to do all of this without pay—even when their work is medically necessary and would be reimbursed if performed by anyone else.

You're not just denying a wage when you deny families access to support that federal Medicaid already allows. You're denying stability. You're denying rest. You're denying a chance to breathe.

States like California and Washington recognize that paying family caregivers helps not just the child, but the entire caregiving ecosystem. It lowers stress, reduces provider turnover, prevents out-of-home placements, and makes mental health support reachable for parents who otherwise can't step away.

Oregon has the opportunity to make the same choice. SB 538 would allow our state to pay parents for the 24/7, complex, and often isolating care they're already giving. When you support this bill, you support the well-being of the entire family system, not just the individual child.

Please pass SB 538, and send a clear message that Oregon values caregiver mental health, family preservation, and equity in access to support.

Thank you for your time.