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Despite qualifying for Medicaid services, many Oregon children with complex medical needs are unable to access the care they are entitled to. This is not due to a lack of eligibility or documentation—it's due to a critical failure in delivery. Families are often approved for dozens of hours of in-home care each week, but cannot find workers willing or able to take those shifts. The result is a devastating gap between what is promised and what is provided.

Senate Bill 538 (Tensy's Law) offers a clear and fair solution: allow parents to be paid caregivers for their minor children with extraordinary needs. This bill does not expand eligibility or create a new category of benefit—it simply makes access to already-approved services more equitable. When care hours go unfilled, children miss therapies, suffer preventable medical complications, and are put at greater risk of hospitalization or institutionalization. Allowing trained, willing parents to fill those roles ensures that care is not only delivered, but delivered by the people who know the child best.

Equity means more than offering the same theoretical services to all—it means recognizing and removing the barriers that prevent some from accessing those services. In this case, the barrier is structural: the law currently prohibits a parent from being paid for care they are already providing, even when no one else will take the job. SB 538 corrects this injustice and honors Oregon's commitment to its most vulnerable residents, ensuring fairness in the provision of care.

By passing SB 538, Oregon can lead with compassion and common sense. We can ensure that Medicaid services are not just available in name, but accessible in practice—for every eligible child, in every corner of the state.