Submitter: Amanda Maxwell

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Preventing the Institutionalization of Children

When in-home care fails, families of children with complex medical needs are sometimes forced to make the heartbreaking decision to institutionalize their child, not because it's what's best for the child, but because there are no other viable options. This is a failure of our system.

Senate Bill 538 (Tensy's Law) offers a compassionate and cost-effective alternative by allowing parents to be paid caregivers for their medically fragile children. This simple but powerful change can mean the difference between a child growing up at home with their family or living in an institution.

Institutional care is not only significantly more expensive for the state, but it can also have long-lasting adverse effects on a child's development and emotional well-being. Research has shown that children do best in family-based settings where they feel safe, loved, and understood. Parents are uniquely positioned to provide this level of care—many are already performing round-the-clock medical tasks that rival those of trained professionals, simply without pay.

Oregon's Medicaid program already authorizes hours for in-home personal support workers, but when no provider is available, those hours go unused, and the burden falls entirely on the family. SB 538 would allow parents to step into those paid roles, preventing unnecessary institutional placements and keeping families together.

We must ask ourselves: is it better to pay a stranger—or to support a loving parent already doing the work? When institutionalization becomes the only option due to a shortage of caregivers, the system is broken. SB 538 provides a clear and humane fix.

Let's keep children in their homes, in their communities, and in the arms of the people who love them most. Pass SB 538 and help Oregon families stay together—because no child should be institutionalized just for lack of care.