

Submitter:	Anne Thomas
On Behalf Of:	SB 538
Committee:	Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB5006

Chair Lieber, Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Anne Thomas, and I'm here to voice my strong support for SB 538, also known as Tensy's Law—a bill that would allow Oregon to join the majority of states in following existing federal Medicaid policy: paying parents to provide in-home care for their children with significant disabilities.

This is not a radical idea—it's already permitted under federal Medicaid guidelines through the 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services waiver. In fact, over 20 other states—including Washington, California, and Colorado—already allow parents of minor children to be paid caregivers. Oregon is an outlier here, not because we can't do this, but because we choose not to.

The federal government will match these funds just as it does for any other Medicaid service. Yet Oregon limits access through programs like the Children's Extraordinary Needs Waiver, which caps participation to around 150 families at a time—even though hundreds more qualify. That's not a funding barrier—that's a policy decision. These are not basic parenting tasks. We're talking about G-tube feedings, suctioning airways, medication administration, seizure response, and constant overnight monitoring. If a nurse or direct support worker were doing this, they'd be paid. But if the child's parent does it, Oregon draws the line.

Tensy's Law would correct that inequity. It would keep families together, prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, and align Oregon with the same federal rules that most other states already use. The federal government has cleared the path—SB 538 simply asks Oregon to follow it.

Please support this bill and help families access the care their children are already entitled to—at home, with the people who know them best.

Thank you.

Anne Thomas