

Submitter: Tristin Thomas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB699

Good afternoon Chair Nosse and members of the committee

I am here to testify in support of SB 699. My name is Tristin Thomas, I am an adaptive athlete, veteran, and student at Portland State studying Health and Fitness. I have had a wonderful experience since becoming disabled in meeting and knowing many other amputee's navigating the world with our uniquely shared experience. All of our stories are different, and because of the inconsistencies in health care across the US, we have different levels of care we have access to. I am a veteran and have access to the VA as a provider of coverage for prosthetic devices. The VA covers not just what is necessary to walk, which, by the way, is the standard of coverage for private and state insurances, but also what devices I need to thrive and participate in an active, healthy lifestyle. The VA has a history and reputation of being frustrating and slow to use, but as it comes to prosthetic coverage, they are the best option in the US. This is not because they do prosthetics better than anyone else, no, but because they view the active lifestyle of veterans as something that needs to be maintained to improve and regulate all other aspects of our health. Veterans aren't the only people who live active lives, in fact the ability to be active is a necessity in most people's lives as one of the main mechanisms they use to stay healthy. Under our current system for private insurance, prosthetic and orthotic devices needed to pursue an active life are not covered, not deemed "medically necessary" and that needs to be fixed. Here is the opportunity to do so, by supporting SB 699, you're allowing amputees and those with limb differences the opportunity to take ownership of their health again. The reality is, a lot of people aren't going to wait for the right foot to start doing the things they want to do, at least in the beginning. They're going to attempt to use whatever they have to live the life they want, they're going to go to work at their active job on a foot that is not designed for high levels of activity, or attempt to exercise on a foot designed only for walking. Our bodies have a way they like to move, and the correct device means the body can move how it is designed. When you use the wrong device, you force your body to move in a way that causes compensatory contractions, which creates muscular imbalances, and ultimately leads to injury and further immobility. And this is not an If, it's a when, no matter how in shape, tough, and gritty you are, eventually, using the wrong device for what you do, you will worsen your condition. People are then unable to work, are unable to be healthy, and are suffering. Plain and simple. This is why it is recognized as a necessity for veterans and is treated as such by the VA. This should be the same for everyone else. As a veteran, this bill will not directly affect me, but I view it as my duty to advocate for those who are affected. I joined the military to defend the people

of this country, and this is a continuation of that service, defending the people that SB 699 will benefit. SB 699 will be the example, that movement and the ability to be mobile is viewed by the state as a human right, and will be addressed before more amputees fall victim to the system and lose hope. I urge you to vote in support of SB 699 so that everyone, regardless of how many limbs they have, can have access to the devices that allow them to live healthy and full lives. Thank you.