



Submitter: **Nicole Ver Kuilen**

On Behalf Of: **Amputee Coalition, So Every BODY Can Move**

Committee: **House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care**

Measure, Appointment or Topic: **SB 699**

Date: **May 8th, 2025**

Position: **Support/Favorable**

Good afternoon Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and members of the committee:

My name is Nicole Ver Kuilen. I am the Director of Impact Campaigns for the Amputee Coalition and the Campaign Lead for So Every BODY Can Move, our national healthcare and disability rights initiative which SB 699 is part of.

When I was 10, I was diagnosed with bone cancer and had my leg amputated to save my life. While still in the hospital, missing all of my hair and taking on rounds of chemo, I learned my "new leg", my prosthesis, wasn't waterproof or meant for physical activity. But this was all our insurance would pay for. Having an additional device to run or swim was considered "not medically necessary." My family didn't have \$10,000 to pay for another leg out of pocket and so I went without.

My dad tried to ensure I still had a childhood. He would wrap my prosthesis in trash bags and duct tape so that I could play in the water. But I was self-conscious and grew to fear getting it wet.

As I got older, I pursued sports to connect with my peers and manage stress. But, my prosthesis still wasn't built for running. I ended up in physical therapy with tremendous back pain because I had literally run my pelvis out of alignment. And I was breaking my prosthetic foot every 6 months when it was supposed to last 3 years. My insurance, though, had no problem paying for PT or replacing a new foot. Expenses that added up to a lot more than if they had simply provided an appropriate prosthesis in the first place.

In 2017, I'd finally had enough. So, I quit my job and did a 1,500 mile triathlon down the west coast - all on my walking prosthesis - to raise awareness. I called my journey Forrest Stump. At the end, I got noticed by a charity and received my first ever running blade - 16 years after my amputation. Since receiving my blade, my insurance has not had to pay for a new foot in over 7 years. More importantly, I can run without pain. And just two weeks ago, I'm honored to say I ran my 5th marathon!

But I believe no amputee should ever have to go to the lengths I did to get the medical care they need. By passing SB 699, Oregon will join 9 other states around the country, including our neighbor state Washington, who in the past two years have made a stand for basic human



dignity, well-being, and opportunity. Movement is medicine and physical activity should be a right, not a privilege.

Thank you Rep. Pham and Senator Reynolds for bringing this bill forward. Let's ensure the next 10-year-old cancer survivor does not have to wait decades to become whole again. Please vote yes on SB 699.

Thank you.