

Submitter: Lisa Loucks

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5547

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Loucks, and I am here today to ask you to remove the ban on paying parents as care workers so that very high needs children with disabilities can access the Medicaid services they are already entitled to.

Oregon has promised these children a way to be served in their homes and communities, instead of much more expensive institutional and out-of-home placements. But for more than 10 years, those services have never been able to be fully utilized, sometimes to devastating effects.

Four years ago, my grandson was diagnosed with autism. Today, he is non-verbal and high on the spectrum. He attends behavioral classes (ABA) four days a week and speech therapy once a week. And attends a special preschool four days a week. So, 5 days a week he needs transported to and from his therapies. Working full time is not an option for my daughter, and neither is doing nothing to help him succeed. I retired early so I could help them a little, but as I age, this gets more difficult to do but for now I'm able to help 2 days a week so she can work a little. They financially struggle if she does not work, but they know that therapy is super important for his success to be independent as an individual and for society.

The only reason Tensy's Law, SB 538, is considered to have an additional cost is because of the state's inability to provide home care for these children. By refusing to recognize parents of minors as part of the home care workforce, the state is making it harder for children to get the support they need and are entitled to.

This isn't about politics. It's about common sense. Paying parents for the care work they do in lieu of their own careers is a simple, cost-effective solution to many problems. It ensures children receive consistent, high-quality care from the people who know them best and stabilizes families in their own homes.

We know this works. During the temporary COVID-19 allowance, Oregon families reported that their disabled children were healthier, happier, and making progress. The stability and continuity of care made a real difference. You have the power to make that positive change permanent.

Oregon has taken steps in the right direction, but the system remains inefficient and restrictive. We need Tensy's Law to remove outdated barriers and fulfill our promises.

Fund the kids, not the system.

Thank you for your time.

Lisa Loucks

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