

Submitter: Calli Ross

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5547

Chairs Campos and Valderrama,

For the record, my name is Calli Ross. But I think you both know that—and you know why I'm here.

I understand the fiscal forecast has put the state in a difficult position. But what I need you to understand is this: we are not “extra.” We are essential. Essential to the families we care for. Essential to the workforce that's collapsing under the weight of an avoidable crisis.

Each night, I work for another child while his mom comes to my house to care for my son—because the state says my son, Tensy, cannot choose his own mother as his caregiver until he turns 18.

I don't know this little boy like I know Tensy. I don't recognize every sound, every look, every medical warning sign. I often have to wake his dad for advice or help. And vice versa. We are swapping our children's care just to survive—because the system has made that our only option.

I can hire nearly anyone else to care for my son. But not myself. Not his mother.

The hours still need to be filled. The care still needs to happen. And there is a workforce to do it—parents who are already trained, already invested, already there. When we discuss Federal medicaid cuts we are not talking those going to home and community based services. When you discuss bolstering our existing supports, Tensy's Law is that answer. The C waiver that exists will continue to bring in a 58% federal match.

Instead of taking the logical, cost-effective step of lifting the ban on paying legally responsible caregivers, the state continues to force families into unsustainable, arrangements—or worse, into costly institutions. It's a false economy. It increases the state budget on programs that don't work while denying families the dignity of choice and stability.

You have the power to fix this. The budget may be tight, but lifting this ban is not a cost—it's a savings. It's common sense. It's justice.

We are not going away. We are showing up. And we are asking—again—to be seen not as burdens, but as partners. Partners in care. Partners in cost-saving. Partners in rebuilding a system that works.