

Submitter: Kelsey Smith

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 Kelsey Smith, and this is my son Taran, 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.

My son Taran is medically fragile and needs help with every aspect of his life, every movement. He does NOT want a revolving door of caregivers attending to his most intimate needs. He wants his mother.

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. For more than 10 years, those services have never been able to be fully utilized, due to caregiver shortages and turnover. These are NOT NEW hours we are requesting. We are not asking for MORE MONEY.

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 using the hours that are already allotted to them. Parents are the built-in, battle-ready solution to a caregiver crisis that the government continues to pour money into. We are trained, we are ALREADY doing the work, and we are not being considered. 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 We need Tensy's Law to remove outdated barriers and fulfill our promises.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.