

**Oregon Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee ,
Medicaid Waiver Protection for Military Special Needs Families
Testimony on SB 97**

by Mark San Souci
March 10, 2015

Honorable Chair Boquist and committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide information and ask for support on Senate Bill 97 sponsored by this committee, to allow Service Members to retain their earned priority for receiving Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waivers. This think this will greatly help military families with special needs dependents who are Oregonians when they return from military service back to their home state.

My name is Mark San Souci, retired Air Force Officer and now Department of Defense (DoD) Regional State Liaison for the Northwestern states, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

Problem: Independent state Medicaid eligibility requirements, and lengthy waiting lists, hinder military families from obtaining supplemental financial support for their children with special needs. Especially when transitioning out of the military with potentially uncertain medical coverage. SB 97 helps those families by enabling them to earn the same priorities afforded to every state resident.

- SB 97 seeks to allow active duty service members to **use their state of legal residence to register their special needs family members for a Medicaid waiver.**
- Enrollment for waivers in their resident state will allow family members to progress along with other state citizens until they become eligible to receive benefits once they move back to Oregon.
- The intent is that **eligibility status is retained as long as the member maintains the state of his/her legal residency and returns to the state after military separation.** The member either received credit for the time on the list or begins receiving benefits when they return home.

- Because of the realities of military mobility from state to state, being enrolled in the state they designate as their legal residence – paying taxes, voting, registering vehicles, driver’s license, own property, etc., seems to make sense.

- One family I know personally described it best: They have a Down’s Syndrome child, and once established as developmentally disabled and qualified, the requirement to take that child back in to ‘prove’ his Down’s Syndrome was like ‘picking the scab all over again’. This family in Washington State was thrilled just to NOT have to go through that turmoil again, when returning to that state, and was most appreciated of just that aspect of this legislation alone.

- We know that TRICARE **does not cover the costs of services for military family members enrolled in the EFMP with multiple medical conditions where 24 hour care and/or long term custodial care services may be required.** Care costs could add up to \$400 or more per day in out-of-pocket costs to the military members, depending on care needs.

- We worked with a national group based in Tacoma, WA, named STOMP -Specialized Training for Military Parents (STOMP) conducted a **nationwide survey of 243 military families** with special needs, from July to October 2013, and found:
 - **45%** applied for Medicaid help for things not covered by Tricare Echo, like respite help, incontinence supplies, special infant formulas, personal support, home and vehicle adaptations, rehabilitative services, specialized clothing, among a long list.
 - **64% got benefits**
 - **65% were on a waiting list**
 - **Longest wait: 58% had waits over 4 years as the longest wait times. 17% had waits of 2-4 years. 10% had waits of 1-2 years.**
 - STOMP survey data is available and I can send to you if you’d like to see it.

- Since our introduction and advocacy of this issue in the states in 2014, the states of Washington, Alaska, Illinois, South Carolina, and Florida have begun providing this benefit to our military families. We ask that you do it too.

-In Washington State and Alaska, where I worked this last year successfully, there was no fiscal note to consider. We know that in making policy decisions that is always crucial.

-Numbers are always important, although they cannot predict how many are in fact residents of Oregon and will take advantage of this policy help. **We know from DMDC data that last year there were 904 active duty sponsors, spouses, and child up to 19 years of age (25,504 just reservists/guard) in the State of Oregon.** So how many of those are resident Oregonians we do not know.

-But we do know, last year according to DMDC data, that for all service components, **1,443 active duty service members separated /retired from the military and returned home to Oregon (also 1,336 NG/reservists). How many of them had special needs we do not know....**

Bottom line: **We are not asking to create a special group of people in this effort. We are asking the state to maintain the benefits extended to all qualified residents, but enable those residents in the military to keep their earned eligibility status in Oregon until they can return home to use it again.** The Department requests that you allow our families to apply for benefits in the same manner as any other residents of the state, without priority processing, without special benefits, and without any special treatment to convey a perceived privilege, other than to simply say you will gladly offer them their earned benefit when they return to the state.

Thank you Chair Boquist for sponsoring this initiative and hearing it today. We sincerely hope your work session on this will move it forward. Thank you for taking up this issue, and for your consideration.

I stand for any questions.

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