



June 24, 2020

Governor Kate Brown; Senate President Peter Courtney, Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner, Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod; House Speaker Tina Kotek, House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner, and House Republican Leader Christine Drazan; members of the Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session:

My name is Kyndall Mason, and I am a political and policy strategist for SEIU Local 503. This testimony is on behalf of the more than 7000+ personal support workers we represent and the clients they support.

We know that with the intersection of disability in someone's life, inequities in access and discrimination also exist. In the last 4 months we are witnessing the fallout that these types of inequities create, when the system is stressed beyond capacity. SB 1606 is a step toward fixing these inequities and saving the lives of Oregonians with disabilities. We are asking for your urgent action to introduce and support the passage of SB 1606 during the Special Session starting on June 24, 2020.

It's understandable that a hospital would need to restrict visitors during a public health crisis. Ironically, a population most affected by something like Covid-19, was not included in creating protocol to "keep people safe". We've heard some pretty harrowing stories about people with disabilities being denied the company of their chosen supports, paid and unpaid. This has resulted in catastrophic effects on people's lives, ranging from denial of services to coercion to sign paperwork and even death.

There is no one way a person with disabilities communicates or participates in the world around them, just as there is no expectation that all able bodied people are the same. Having access to supports can be critical for the well being and safety of a person with disabilities. Losing access to a support provider in an emergency, or during a stressful time, has adverse effects on not just the experience in the hospital, but perhaps even long term.

We urge your support in approving SB 1606, in order to fix a well intentioned protocol that has resulted in painful and even deadly outcomes.

Thank you,

Kyndall Mason

Policy Strategist, SEIU Local 503