

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Nosse, and members of the Committee,

My name is Diane Solomon. I am a doctorally prepared nurse, psychiatric nurse practitioner, Board member of Oregon Nurses Association and Nurse Practitioners of Oregon, and adjunct faculty at OHSU. I am also a single mother of a 15-year-old who lives with significant impacts from Autism Spectrum Disorder. My son is smart, kind, and loving, but minimally verbal. When he becomes frustrated and is not able to communicate verbally, he sometimes lashes out. I have been hit, kicked, pinched, and bitten more times than I can count.

When my son was 6, we were gifted with a wonderful case manager from my county Developmental Disability Services. This woman has helped me help my son access life-changing camps and other services I would not possibly have known even existed. She helped me, as his mother, navigate the journey of parenting a boy with moderate to severe autism. Because of case management, I have had personal support workers helping my son so I could have a slice of life and, literally, be able to leave my house. I have had respite care so every once in a blue moon I could sleep away from home and have a much needed break, returning refreshed and a better, more responsive mother.

Through all this, it was the case manager who helped me navigate the system, who let me know what services were available, who brainstormed solutions, and who listened when I cried, at the end of my rope. It was the case manager who let me know my options, and who was completely supportive when I came to the gut-wrenching decision, during the pandemic, that my teenager—much bigger than I am now—was more than I could handle. It was the case manager who facilitated my thinking through options of foster care or group home, who held my hand through screening visits and tours, who helped me find an ideal placement for my son, less than 20 minutes from home. There, his behavior has improved, as have his social skills; he is thriving with other youth and a house full of activity, he is much happier when he comes home weekly, and every day I know I made the right decision. None of this would have happened without ID/DD case management.

I have a PhD, I am a psychiatric provider, I am savvy and, dare I say, smart enough to negotiate most systems. Yet there is no way I could have navigated the shoals of parenting a child with a significant developmental disability without the excellence, knowledge, compassion, and assistance of case management. I think of those without the myriad privileges and access to services I have been blessed with—how could they possibly get the help they need for their child and family? There is no way. I urge you to please fund the case management budget to the full extent possible, and ask you to contact me for any further needed information.

Thank you so very much.