

BACKBONES is a national organization serving people with spinal cord injuries and disabilities. Too often we see the people we serve struggle with Medicaid income restrictions despite their desire to work and self-actualize; many people with disabilities must decide between health care (life and death) and work. Medicaid asset and income restrictions unjustly penalize workers with a disability who need long-term supports and services. By restricting a disabled employee's ability to earn and save, the State has closed all pathways to prosperity in the best-case scenario, and indentured that family to poverty in more difficult circumstances. The employed Oregonian with a disability, who buys-in to Medicaid for the long-term supports and services they need to thrive, can never take a pay raise, even if they merit it, without risking losing their health benefits. These policies are oppressive, regressive and discriminatory against people with disabilities. We are missing out on the valuable contributions of people with disabilities to our society!

BACKBONES supports this bill because it will truly help create equal opportunity in employment and equity for the disabled community. Oregon would join a few other states such as Washington and Colorado in becoming a model for other states to follow suit. As a person with a disability myself and director of an organization serving people with disabilities I understand the life changing impact this will make on Oregonians for a start but more importantly for over 60 million Americans who live with a disability (26 percent/ or one in 4). I urge you to consider the huge impact this can make on millions of lives!!!