

February 5, 2023

Dear Senate Committee on Human Services,

Thank you for holding this important hearing on making permanent the Paid Parent Caregiving Program in Oregon. I work for a national provider agency and do advocacy and policy work in Minnesota. I have met virtually with some of the amazing Oregon parents who have been leading this effort and am writing in support of SF646.

Minnesota was the first state to receive approval from CMS to allow parents of minors to be paid to provide care for their children. We received this approval in the early 2000's through our 1915c Waiver for consumer directed services. We did this because parents are often the best caregivers for their child with special needs, many parents of kids with disabilities were unable to hold a job outside of the home due to the needs of their child, and even back then, it was sometimes hard to hire staff to care for their child.

Minnesota is now working on approval of the 1915K which will broaden the programs that allow parents of minors to be paid to provide care for their minor children. Oregon is ahead of Minnesota, as they already have their 1915K approval. Paying legally responsible persons, including parents of minors and spouses, is allowed with the 1915K.

The workforce crisis has only gotten worse since Minnesota first received approval to allow parents of minors to be paid, and the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified this crisis nationwide. Many parents have ended up bearing the brunt of this caregiver shortage, often jeopardizing their ability to maintain employment outside of the home.

I urge the committee to support SF646 and make permanent the Paid Parent Caregiving Program in Oregon. This bill supports the philosophy of self-determination and provides choice and control to families. I also want to thank Senator Knopp for authoring this important bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my letter of support.

Sincerely,

Vicki Gerrits, advocacy and policy leader

TEAM Services

vicki@teamsvc.com