



October 10, 2022

To: Lilia Teninty, Director Office of DD Services Oregon
Developmental Disabilities Council
Oregon Support Services Association
Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition
Tri-County Provider Groups

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From: UCP Oregon Board of Directors

We are writing to communicate UCP Oregon’s full support for paying parents of minor children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) for needed services within the family home. UCP Oregon provides daily support for 1200 customers with I/DD. For the past 20 years, the agency has also proudly maintained an active Family Support Network, funded without governmental resources. The present Network of 400 families is engaged in group support, conferences, and training, as well as advocating for systemic change to benefit our customers and families.

Our position grows from:

- Lessons learned during the pandemic. During the pandemic, families were largely unable to use outside providers for in-home care. Through an exception initiated by the federal government, legal representatives (typically parents) could be paid for their caregiving labor. We have heard from families that this temporary program led to better outcomes for children's mental and physical health and decreased stress for the entire family.

- The ongoing homecare worker shortage (PSWs, DSPs, etc.). Families were unable to fill home-care worker positions before the pandemic, and unfortunately, these circumstances are ongoing. The I/DD community has been historically underserved and adding a pandemic has exacerbated the situation to crisis levels.

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We recognize that on the surface this policy expansion appears simple, but in truth it is very complex.

- Oregon needs to allocate additional resources to pay parents of minor children. The state must maximize all available (school and public health) funding, and yet not jeopardize the existing services for children and adults. Paying parents is an effective solution to the workforce crisis, and we also support the needs of our third-party caregivers. This is not an either/or recommendation. Effective professional workforce strategies remain at the core and cannot be sidetracked.
- To move beyond “pilot projects adopted in other states,” changes will be required in policy and practice at the federal and state levels.
- Program implementation must ensure access and equity for our most diverse families, who are historically the most disenfranchised.
- We support an open and public process with the support and engagement of stakeholders across the state, especially the families who experience this reality daily. We stand ready to participate in town hall-type discussions when they are initiated.

UCP Oregon has demonstrated our interest and willingness to support families in the provision of in-home supports to their children. We are stronger together. We remain hopeful that continued conversation and our collective advocacy will result in expanded services for families in the future.

Sincerely,

UCP Oregon Board of Directors
Jerry Hoffert, President