

Submitter: Cassandra Diza  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure: SB646

To the Oregon Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Cassandra Diza and I live in Milwaukie, OR. I am writing on behalf of my autistic 5 year old son with high support needs, Tobias (Toby), in favor of Paid Parent Caregiving, specifically SB 646.

Toby is still young and does not yet qualify for enough hours for paid parent caregiving. This is unfortunate because Toby has very limited receptive and expressive communication skills, a plethora of sensory issues and requires assistance with basic tasks like eating, dressing, personal hygiene and diapering, well beyond the needs of a typical five year old. Toby needs constant supervision to ensure he does not harm himself or elope.

Toby does not respond well to strangers in our home due to bad past experiences with paid behavioral technicians. Currently, Toby receives care from his uncle, who is the only one besides myself and my husband who Toby trust and who knows Toby enough to sufficiently understand and address his needs. However, his uncle has a physical disability which will likely limit his ability to continue providing care for Toby. This will leave us with limited prospects.

It cannot be understated how much paid parent caregiving would help our family, especially Toby, to thrive. We do what is best for our children but this often means choosing whether to put food on the table or provide the the time and enrichment that could help Toby make breakthroughs. Did you know that mothers of children with ASD earn on average 56% less than mothers of children with no developmental disabilities? (Cidav Z, Marcus SC, Mandell DS. Implications of childhood autism for parental employment and earnings. *Pediatrics*. 2012 Apr;129(4):617-23. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-2700. Epub 2012 Mar 19. PMID: 22430453; PMCID: PMC3356150). Instead of struggling to get by, as we currently do, trying to balance caring for Toby and making a living, we could be devoting more resources to Toby's progress. My husband and myself know my son (and his complex needs and behaviors) like the back of our hands. We are here, reliable and absolutely devoted to Toby. We work directly with his occupational and speech therapists to create plans to help Toby reach his full potential.

I understand that the budget is a concern. I can say for our family, it makes no difference in cost if it's me or Toby's uncle doing the hours. It's only more expensive if the hope is that we will be unable to find PSWs and in that case, what is the point of

giving us hours that we can't use? As a family we have had to rely on government programs like WIC to make ends meet. Paid parent caregiving would make us more self-sufficient as a family. And the long-term financial benefits of dedicated, reliable and loving caregivers for children with developmental disabilities cannot be understated. No one is more committed to helping our son stay healthy and reach his full potential than myself and his father. Caring for our son will be a lifelong, 24/7 job. My hope is that your investment in my family will pay off when Toby becomes an adult who can take care of himself because we were able to do absolutely everything possible to ensure his future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.