



February 3, 2021

Senator Sara Gelser Bluin
Committee on Human Services
Oregon Senate

Senator Gelser Bluin and Members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Institute on Development and Disability, which includes: Oregon Office on Disability and Health, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and the Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs at Oregon Health & Science University. Collectively, our centers ask for your support regarding Senate Bill 576, which will require the Oregon Health Authority to provide medical assistance to employed individuals with disabilities without regard to income or resources, removing asset and income eligibility restrictions for Medicaid recipients receiving long-term supports.

This Bill seeks changes to eligibility limitations to the Employed Persons with Disabilities (EPD) program. The EPD is important because it allows employed people with disabilities to receive medical coverage and long-term services. Long-term services are not usually included in major medical insurance plans, and so in many cases, individuals with disabilities do not have alternatives for these supports, services, and coverage. The ability to maintain access to these services through the Medicaid program is essential to the health and well-being of many people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the current EPD income and resource limits force many people with disabilities who rely on long-term services to reduce their incomes, limit assets, and even forego employment opportunities in order to maintain needed services. In Oregon and across the nation, trends indicate that people with disabilities are underemployed, and that they are more likely to work part-time and earn lower average incomes than people without disabilities. Public policies - including limits on income and assets for people with disabilities to receive Medicaid benefits - contribute to this reality. To be eligible for long-term supports and services through Medicaid Buy-In, an employed Oregonian with a disability must limit their income to below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$32,000 for a family of 1 or \$55,000 for a family of 3). This amount limits individuals with disabilities from many types of employment and opportunities for advancement. EPD eligibility requirements also limit countable assets to \$5,000, making it impossible for employed individuals with disabilities to save for the future well-being of themselves and their families.

Denying individuals employment or income opportunities on the basis of disability is unjust. To promote health and prevent long-term illness, promoting upstream social determinants of health is of utmost importance. Employment and income are two such social determinants that act as strong predictors of health status. The stress that accompanies an unstable financial safety net has further negative effect

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The Institute Includes:

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Oregon Center for Children
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Health Needs

Oregon Office on Disability
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Hemophilia Program

Leadership Education in
Neurodevelopmental
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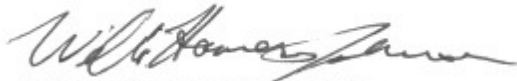
on health. Receiving needed healthcare, including long-term supports, should not limit an individual's right to work or to receive deserved compensation for that work, regardless of disability status.

Collectively, our group of centers works with individuals with disabilities, families, clinicians, researchers and many others toward the goal of promoting the health and quality of life of people with disabilities. We embrace the right of people with disabilities to determine the course of their lives and to live as fully integrated, contributing members of their communities, and we strive for health equity. To achieve these goals, we must allow all in Oregon access to health care and the opportunity to prosper economically. Removing the income and asset limitations to the EPD program is an important step toward health equity for people with disabilities in Oregon. Thank you for your support of SB 576.

Respectfully,



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