

Submitter: Cassandra Diza
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB91

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and Members of the 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, in favor of Paid Parent Caregiving.

We represent a family that SB91 (in its current form) would exclude. My son is only 5 and so does not currently have enough hours to qualify for the paid parent program. However, he requires around the clock supervision to ensure he does not elope or injure himself. He has extremely limited expressive AND receptive communication skills. Meeting his needs and providing adequate and safe care for him requires intimate knowledge of his nonverbal queues which can be nearly imperceptible to those outside his family. He also has trauma from experiences with past caregivers and behavioral techs and no longer tolerate strangers in our home without distress. This makes finding safe care and respite impossible.

Meeting the needs of my son absolutely prohibits me from stable employment, which means that we barely make it month to month. I'm not alone there. 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).

Oregon's Developmentally Disabled children deserve access to the best, most qualified caregivers, their parents. They also deserve financial stability and their disability should not automatically disqualify them from that. To quote someone who bravely testified on behalf of SB646, "imagine a state where disability and poverty are not synonymous." No one knows the needs of our states most vulnerable children better than their parents, so help us to give our children their best chance.

I implore you to please make SB 91 more accessible before passing it out of committee.

Sincerely,
Cassandra