

Submitter: Matthew Thomas
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB576
Date: February 8, 2023

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I'm writing in full SUPPORT of SB 576, which, if passed, would be life changing in a monumental sense.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony in support of SB 576. The following is in regards to personal circumstances and the income and asset limits for the Employed Persons with Disabilities program (EPD). This program allows individuals with disabilities to work and still receive Medicaid benefits. Medicaid is important because it covers the caregiving I need for my daily existence.

As a professional engineer my earning potential is decent, but I'm constantly weighing being compensated at the industry standard vs what I'm "allowed" to make to keep my Medicaid benefits. This has limited my upward progression at work and the ability to receive work incentives such as bonuses. Furthermore, The income limits and financial eligibility are poorly understood by DHS staff and every year my benefits get canceled and then I have to educate the DHS on the EPD guide book. this causes a great deal of stress for me and my family. I feel that the income limits infringe on my basic constitutional rights and greatly impact my life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

The asset limit of 5000 is also inhibiting. I cannot save money for basic vehicle repairs or house repairs. Therefore, I am forced to go into debt whenever an emergency repair or even a planned one based on require maintenance exceeds 5000. I'm married with a daughter and I constantly worry I won't be able to adequately provide or we would have to move out of our home due to emergency combined with the restrictive asset limit.

From a financial point of view it seems like a win win for the State of Oregon to lift

these limits. For most of us who are disabled we have no choice but do everything we can stay eligible for the Medicaid benefits. That cost is a sunk cost for the State. If these limits were removed than those working could make more money and pay more taxes. Not to mention increase in employment (taxes) for those who are not working because of how horribly the program is currently managed. Before working I was getting benefits and paying zero dollars to the State. Now that I'm working I pay 150/month for my buy-in and ~10,000/year in taxes, which is significantly more than 0. Win win!

If the income and asset limits (SB 576 passes) I plan on starting my own engineering firm that would eventually employ other people, but this is prohibitive given the current limits.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Matt Thomas