

Submitter: Christopher Wilcox  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure: SB646

I would like to voice my support for bill 646. Parents are providing a service to the state in the form of care for its disabled children and the wording of the law has forced parents to provide this service unpaid. We are forced to do this work unpaid because the services to provide disabled children the level of care that is needed don't exist, and to not provide these services would be neglect, which of course is not an option, not only due to our own morality and love for our children, but it is not legally an option.

There is no entity that will recruit and train caregivers for our children, parents must do that for free. There is no place where we can bring our disabled child to receive care, our homes are the place. There is nobody that fills the gap when a DSP is sick, or the child is sick, or the DSP doesn't show up, or quits. Parents are the backup in all of these incredibly common situations. To continue to refuse to pay parents for doing this work is harming parents, families and especially children. Disabled children deserve for their caregivers to be paid whether that caregiver is a parent or not. Disabled children shouldn't have to submit to strangers providing their most intimate and private care when parents are more qualified and willing to be their care.

Another issue that keeps being mentioned is the cost. That paying parent caregivers will be expensive, and I find that so frustrating because yes, it is more expensive for the state to actually pay for the support these children have been promised and stop relying on the parents to provide this care unpaid.

Senate Bill 91 is too small a bandaid on too large of a wound. I urge lawmakers to support SB646 and then to not stop there. I believe the services that recruit, train, and schedule quality outside caregivers should exist. I believe that places within the community that parents can bring their children to receive quality care should exist. I've heard senators say that Oregon is a leader in caring for disabled children but as a stepparent of a disabled child I can say that in May when the emergency funding for paid parent caregiving ends, this will be far from the truth. It is easy to say that you are a leader, but it takes much more than the state has been doing to actually be one. The first step is to pass SB646 and begin paying the people for the important and difficult work that they do every day.