

In Support for SB 91

Hello, my name is Lenore Eklund, I live in Portland and I would like to speak in support of Senate Bill 91. My daughter, Charlee Eklund, is six-years old, uses a wheelchair, is non-verbal, needs a g-tube for nutrition, requires daily airway suctioning, and needs full assistance to access all of her daily activities.

It is said that sometimes the government sees disabled kids as price tags rather than children with capabilities to thrive and experience life, but I want to share how we can mix business and quality of life.

Two years ago when the COVID-19 Federal Public Health Emergency began, I was hired to provide care for Charlee. With the healthcare worker shortage, not only was I an asset for the state but I also brought a level of experience and qualification that can only be found in a parent of a child with disabilities. Using my specialized skill set, I was able to maintain a stable and reliable routine for Charlee. Because of the extent of time I am with Charlee, I am more in tune with changes in mood, energy level, and quality of sleep, all of which could indicate something serious when there is a change from baseline. Before the pandemic, Charlee was averaging at least two ER visits with hospital admissions per year. My level of caregiving has eliminated any need to go to the ER, saving the state about \$72k over the last two years.

We are not the only family who has experienced these kinds of results. A similar program already in place in Colorado has data collected from 700 participants that shows rehospitalization rates decreased six-times, saving the state substantially in costs annually.

Without this bill, in May of 2023 I will be forced to resign as Charlee Eklund's most qualified caregiver. However, you have the ability to change that now with the passage of Senate Bill 91.