

Senator Gelser-Blouin and members of the committee,

My name is Emily Braman and I am the parent of two children. I am writing in support of SB1557-5. I adopted my children as a sibling set through the Oregon Child Welfare program when they were two and three. They are now 16 and 17. I wanted to share with you today the different trajectories of my children given that one is eligible for services through the Oregon Office of Developmental Disability Services and receives in-home supports while my other child, with multiple mental health diagnosis and suspected developmental disability, has been unable to receive ongoing supports and services.

My youngest child has an intellectual disability diagnosis and a co-occurring mental health diagnosis with intellectual disability being the primary diagnosis. She has been receiving supports and services since birth, including Home and Community Based Services through what is referred to as the K Plan since Oregon started that program. Through this program my child has access to attendant care, a person who supports her one on one to meet her daily care needs and the goals on her Individual Support Plan, as well as access to assistive technology, adaptive equipment, and home modifications. There is also access to 14 days a year of relief care so that I, as the sole parent, can get a break. Currently, she is thriving as a junior in high school. Everyday at home she works on becoming more independent with her support person, accessing her community with her support person just as other teens going to movies, the arcade, and sports, and knows that she has someone, in addition to mom, to help her get her needs met.

My oldest child has a much different experience. Since they were three, I have been advocating and fighting for appropriate mental health supports. They have been in and out of therapy, been on and off medications, and seen times of success and times of breakdown. We have been through Child Parent Therapy, Intensive In-Home Supports, Peer Mentoring, medication, and out-patient therapy. There have been times in the past five years where I was not sure my child and I could make it another day, let alone the years left until they were an adult. At one point, from ages 13 through 16, my child understood that I was scared of them due to their aggression and used this to regularly threaten me with physical harm. This aggression resulted in interactions with the police that resulted in a referral to Juvenile Justice and being expelled from high school. It became apparent through trying to advocate for my child that Mental Health/Behavioral Health services were not available for my child and that what seemed like the only possible way to obtain services and support for my child was through Juvenile Justice. One of the conversations I most remember with my child's Juvenile worker was that I had to keep reporting everything to build a case against my child. Once there was enough evidence against my child then maybe services and support could be court ordered and my child could get the support they needed. This was heartbreaking, I had to make my kid out to be a bad kid in order to get help. My child is not bad, they needed support not punishment.

My child currently does not attend school, barely leaves their darkened room, has a conviction on their juvenile record and frequently disappears from home for days at a time. I feel, most if not all of this can be tied back directly to lack of services and supports for their mental health diagnoses. I can not help but think that having stable, long-term supports and services starting during childhood, prior to adolescence, would have assisted in providing a more positive trajectory for their life as it has for my youngest. I will leave you with this. We had one glimmer of success that if it could have continued, which if this bill had been in place it could have, most likely would have resulted in stabilizing my child. During our time with Intensive In Home Support my child and I were mentored in Collaborative Problem Solving. This worked great when the in-home support person, through this program, was present to assist in the process.

However due to the extreme conflict, which is a manifestation of their mental health diagnosis, between my child and I we could not and still can not do Collaborative Problem Solving without a third person present. With ongoing support from a support worker, providing that stabilizing third voice, my child would have been able to engage in the Collaborative Problem Solving process. This engagement most likely would have led to engagement in the therapeutic process for my child and a better, most stable, less volatile situation in our home, in addition to reduction or elimination of my child's involvement with Juvenile Justice.

Thank you for your time.