

Submitter: Patrick Murphy
On Behalf Of: SB 538 CEN Waiver
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patrick Murphy, and I am reaching out to you today with an urgent request regarding a crucial piece of legislation—SB 538—that would significantly impact the lives of vulnerable children in Oregon, particularly those with severe disabilities.

As you are aware, the CEN waiver has been a vital resource for the 155 families navigating the complex landscape of care for high-needs children. However, over 1300 children are stuck on a wait list. The current cap on the CEN waiver restricts the known eligible kids leaving many families without access to the Medicaid services their children are entitled to. It is imperative that we remove this cap, and allow parents to provide the necessary extraordinary care that their children require.

The framework established by SB 91 in 2023 was commendable, a pivotal success, but without the necessary funding and support for eligible children, we are perpetuating a system that is both inefficient and inequitable. For over a decade, Oregon has made commitments to serve these children in their homes and communities, yet many families are unable to access the care they need due to ongoing workforce shortages, system barriers, and Oregon's restrictive policies.

In rural Southern Oregon, my family faces the harsh reality of this shortage daily. We are unable to find qualified caregivers, yet the need for support remains constant. By funding the amendment to allow for a 40-hour workweek for parents under the CEN waiver, we can ensure that families like mine have the resources they need to care for their children effectively. We can keep families together. We can keep children in their own communities.

It is essential to recognize that the additional costs associated with SB 538 are largely a result of the state's failure to adequately support home care for these children. By acknowledging parents as part of the home care workforce, we can create a more sustainable and effective system in Oregon that benefits everyone involved. The federal government pays largely .70 cents on the dollar for this care.

This is not merely a political issue; it is a matter of common sense and compassion. It's the right thing to do. Paying parents for their caregiving work not only provides financial support but also guarantees that children receive high-quality, consistent care from those who know them best. The success seen during the temporary

allowances granted during the COVID-19 pandemic proves that this approach works—families reported improved health and happiness for their children during that time.

Oregon has made strides in the right direction, but we must continue to push for necessary changes to remove outdated barriers and fulfill our promises to these children and their families. I urge you to prioritize SB 538 and ensure that it does not fall by the wayside this session again. This bill represents the culmination of three legislative sessions of hard work and countless hours of advocacy by parents, children, and advocates who have shared their experiences with you in good faith entrusting that you will act to protect and serve them.

Please support SB 538 and help us secure the future of our most vulnerable children. Fund the kids, not the system.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Patrick Murphy
Winston, Oregon