

Submitter: Hayley Palmer  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

My name is Hayley Palmer, and I am a single mom and caregiver of a child with significant medical needs. I am here today in strong support of SB 538 because it addresses a critical gap in our caregiving system—one that leaves families like mine struggling to provide the care our children have already been approved to receive.

Currently, my child qualifies for attendant care services through ODHS, yet we face a severe shortage of caregivers. Despite being awarded these critical care hours, I am often left to provide the care myself—without compensation. SB 538 does not ask for additional services—it simply ensures that parents, who are already stepping in to fill this role, are fairly compensated for the essential care we provide.

I understand the concern that SB 538 could become costly over time, particularly as Oregon works to strengthen the caregiving workforce. However, it's important to recognize that this bill does not create new services or add additional costs. The care hours in question have already been approved and budgeted for. The only difference is ensuring that when parents step in to provide the care due to workforce shortages, they are compensated—just as any hired caregiver would be.

Oregon has worked to improve the direct support workforce in an effort to utilize all awarded care hours. But that hasn't happened. The ongoing shortage of caregivers proves that these efforts have fallen short—particularly for children with complex medical and behavioral needs. But you know where the state can find highly qualified, dedicated caregivers for this exact population? The parents who are already doing the work—for free.

And here's the frustrating reality: I could be hired and paid by the state to provide attendant care for another child with the same needs as my own—but not for my own child. This makes no sense. If I am qualified to do this work for someone else, I am certainly qualified to do it for my own child, whose needs I know better than anyone.

Finally, while the concern about long-term costs is understandable, I would ask: If Oregon suddenly had enough DSPs to fill every approved care hour, would the state argue that it had become too expensive to provide the services these children were already deemed eligible for? Of course not. The services are already part of the budget—the only difference is ensuring they are delivered, regardless of who provides them.

SB 538 is about equity, stability, and fully utilizing the resources Oregon has already

committed to children with disabilities. It offers a practical solution that ensures children receive the care they need, while recognizing the essential role that parents are already playing. I urge you to support this bill and help families like mine provide the care our children deserve without sacrificing our own financial stability.

Lastly, I need to address the severe lack of accessibility that the Mt Hood Community College Theater displayed today. There was no signage of a separate ADA entrance at the main building where everyone else entered the building. I had to walk inside the building and inquire about how to access the theater. I was then taken back outside and we followed a very long path to the BACK of the building. That was the only exterior sign presenting an ADA entrance, when I was already at it. Once inside, the "landing zone" for wheelchairs was incredibly insufficient in size. Only a few wheelchairs could fit there, and barely enough room for any caregiver or personal attendant to be with them. We were packed in like sardines and felt incredibly unsafe. There were also no ADA push buttons at the restrooms. If any one of these individuals were to experience an urgent medical need, it would have been very dangerous. I urge you to never hold a public forum at this location again. I also urge you to think from a different perspective when choosing future venues.

Thank you for your time and consideration.