

Ways & Means Roadshow Testimony

4/6/2025

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of this committee. My name is Belau Gamblin and I'm a policy analyst for a statewide children's residential program. I live in Portland, in State Senate District 22 and House District 43, and I'm also a proud member of SEIU 503.

I am testifying today to ask you to prioritize protecting Oregonians and our immediate needs in your state budget, including Medicaid which fully funds my program along with so many other Developmental Disabilities programs throughout the state. My program, State Children's Residential Services within the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services, has doubled in size, twice as many children we now support, with the same number of staff. The same number of passionate, hard-working case managers who may be the only stable presence in some of these kids' lives. Without critical Medicaid funding, this and programs like it simply won't exist and children with the highest needs in the state will lose vital services; services for a child whose mom and dad cannot care for them, who has been moving from state, to state, to state, to state, no place to call home, so many strangers and different faces, no stability; services that would provide this child a safe space to make friends, excel in school, learn important skills to reconnect to their community, and start to be a kid again.

I come from a very diverse background, a childhood where we relied on food stamps. At the time I had no idea what that meant, but I do still remember my mom embarrassed about having to reveal that in a grocery store. So how is this relevant to why I'm writing this today? The only reason I'm here today is because of public programs, because of my incredible family, because of the

community around me who taught me so much, cleared the bramble, built the bridges, that ultimately allowed me to submit this testimony to you. It is this kind of support that is even more vital to the kids living in residential homes around the state which are funded by Medicaid and staffed with direct support professionals, many who took the job because they want to be part of that supportive community. These programs are dedicated to helping kids 10, 11 years old, sometimes even younger; helping kids who carry such heavy burdens finally work towards those goals they'd only previously dreamed about, or didn't even realize they wanted.

Actions from the White House and GOP Congress are enriching billionaires but creating chaos, job losses, higher prices, and economic instability for everyday people. Oregonians need you to protect us by holding steady and not overreacting to the chaos. Please refrain from making pre-emptive cuts based on speculation about what might happen in DC, which would simply be a signal to Elon Musk and other billionaires that you are willing to help cover the cost of billionaire tax breaks by sacrificing some of the most critical basic services all Oregonians rely on.

In closing, I am so grateful for being given the opportunity to continue our long tradition of advocating for and building this incredible democracy. It's truly an honor and a privilege, my first time, but one that I take very seriously. Because I wouldn't be here if it weren't for people before me advocating for the same basic services that I'm advocating for now.

The Time is now: Prioritize investments that maximize opportunities for Oregon families and communities. Reject new Oregon tax breaks for corporations and the ultra-wealthy. Please preserve Medicaid at the current funding levels. Oregonians deserve it. Our kids deserve it. Thank you.

