

# Employing Parent Caregivers Bill



A bill to allow employment eligibility for parent caregivers of disabled children in Washington  
*Sponsored by Representative Jamila Taylor*

---

The state of Washington currently permits parents to be employed caregivers for their children with disabilities once the child is over the age of 18. The state does not extend this same option to parents of minors who are filling the same role and providing the same level of care. The only differentiating factor is the chronological age of the care recipient. This policy is inequitable on its face, discriminatory and significantly reduces children's utilization of needed Medicaid services.

Across the country, the federal government and individual states are taking steps toward improving access to services through employed family caregiving. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 38 states employed parent caregivers of minors and many have or are working towards implementing permanent programs. Dan Tsai, the director of the Center for Medicaid Services said, "The silver lining of the pandemic was seeing the impact of having paid family caregivers in the Medicaid program... we think it's important from a workforce standpoint, we think it's really important for care." Despite this national movement toward family caregiving, Washington continues to fall behind and fails to provide needed services to their most vulnerable citizens and their families.

## THE FACTS

---

- 4,700 children in WA meet federal criteria for Institutional Level Care and were allocated in-home Medicaid Personal Care hours to live safely in their communities.
- In WA, parents of minors are prohibited from being employed caregivers, but parents of adult children can be employed.
- Families can't find eligible caregivers to hire due to workforce shortages and typical childcare settings are unable to care for medically complex, high needs children.
- Parent caregivers are often forced to leave the workforce to provide this extraordinary care uncompensated, leaving the entire family in financial hardship.
- According to DDA, 41% of all children's allocated care funds go unspent each year. This amounts to 1.4 million uncompensated caregiving hours worked by parents.
- This restriction disproportionately impacts women, single parents, people of color, low-income households and families with language access barriers.
- Employing parents will put **\$50 million** (*half federally matched funds*) in wages and benefits toward households caring for children with disabilities.
- Since 2020, 39 states have employed parent caregivers of minors, but not Washington.
- The bill's yearly "cost" is merely access to the funds already promised; \$25 million in children's yearly Personal Care hours that previously went unspent.

*The Employ Parent Caregiver Bill is simple-  
It expands the caregiver workforce and improves children's access to needed services*