

# Employing Parent Caregivers Bill



A bill to allow employment eligibility for parent caregivers of disabled children in Washington  
HB 1200 Sponsored by Representative Jamila Taylor & SB 5211 Sponsored by Senator Noel Frame

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 authorizing family caregivers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 38 states employed parent caregivers of minors and many have implemented permanent programs since. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services now says, "States are **required** to ensure individuals have access to needed services... and... states should **strongly consider** the authorization of legally responsible individuals [e.g. parents of minors] to **meet their requirement** of ensuring the delivery of needed services." Despite this national movement and federal direction toward family caregiving, Washington continues to fall behind and fails to make services accessible to their most vulnerable citizens.

## THE FACTS

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- 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 worsening workforce shortages and typical childcare settings are unable to care for medically complex and high needs children
- Parent caregivers are often forced to leave the workforce to provide this extraordinary care uncompensated, leaving the entire family in financial crisis
- According to DDA, 41% of all WA children's allocated Personal 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, 38 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*