

My name is Brenda Durbin; I am Director of Clackamas County Social Services, a Division of Clackamas County's Health, Housing and Human Services Department (H3S). I am pleased to testify today on behalf of the Department in **support of HB 2091 and HB 2115** for the Oregon Working Family Childcare Tax Credit.

Quality, affordable childcare is one critical component in creating the type of nurturing and supportive environment that every child needs if they are to meet their full potential. Helping lower income households afford quality childcare should be a priority for the state of Oregon.

Science has proven the importance of a nurturing environment for brain development. Adverse childhood experiences can negatively impact a child's future health, mental health, and even their future income potential. Quality childcare that includes nutritious food and experienced caregivers can provide the type of environment this is so important to growing brains and bodies.

For parents, knowing that their child is in the care of a qualified provider gives peace of mind and allows them to focus on their job responsibilities or their education. The challenge for many low and moderate income households trying to access quality, affordable childcare is cost. For some households, the cost of childcare is greater than what they pay for rent.

Oregon's Working Family Childcare Tax Credit is one way that Oregon helps families afford quality childcare. HB 2091 would double the applicable percentage of taxpayer's child care expenses allowed as credit, providing additional relief to families who are struggling to make ends meet. HB 2115 would extend the sunset of this tax credit.

Financial support, like that provided through the Working Families Childcare Tax Credit, can mean the difference between choosing a quality licensed childcare that provides an enriched environment, and a more informal situation where a child, particularly one with special needs, may not get the support and attention he or she needs.

I recently heard from a co-worker at Clackamas County who benefited from this program. With very little notice she accepted responsibility for caring for her grandchild, at the same time that another life change resulted in a significant reduction in her household income. Like most parents and grandparents, she would do whatever it takes to ensure that her grandchild was safe. At the same time she needed to ensure that she could be at work, ready to perform her job duties and not be distracted by worrying about who was caring for her grandson. In her case, she was able to tap into savings in order to pay the \$800/month child care bill. The extra income she received by applying for the tax credit helped her immensely.

As wages for lower income workers continue to stagnate, and housing and other expenses increase, now is the time for Oregon to increase support for our working families. I applaud and support the proposal to increase the size of the tax credit and extend the sunset date.

Thank you.