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To: House Committee on Business and Labor

From: Roberta Dunn, FACT [Family and Community Together]

RE: Support for HB 2646 Amendments

Dear Chair Holvey, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of FACT (Family and Community Together), I would like to offer our support for Senator Chris Edwards' amendment to HB2646 in which parents would be able to access unpaid leave in order to participate in their child's disability support planning meetings.

FACT is committed to supporting the independence and health of Oregonians who experience disability. Since 2002, FACT has served hundreds of families of students experiencing disability. As Oregon's parent training and information center, we advocate that parents be active, informed members on their child's IEP team so that their child can reach his or her potential when s/he transitions into adulthood.

Annually, students with disabilities and their families participate in several planning meetings to arrange disability-related supports that will help them meet their goals at school, home, and in their communities. These plans have the child's future in mind, and build supports and services that will help him or her be successful in education, employment, and independent living.

The guilt a parent feels when having to choose between being a present and effective advocate for his or her child versus keeping a job that pays the bills is unimaginable. This is the choice that many of the families that we support face.

Parent engagement is pivotal to an individual who experiences disability's successful transition into adulthood. To that end, FACT urges the committee to widen HB2646 to include the rights of parents to use unpaid parental leave to attend disability support planning meetings on behalf of their children. This would support the movement of parents and caregivers, people with disabilities, and community agencies that are focused on inclusion of people with disabilities into every facet of life.

Sincerely,

Roberta Dunn, Executive Director, FACT - Family and Community Together