

***Testimony Supporting SB 890 from Beverly Stein, Director of Research
and Development, National Policy Consensus Center, Portland State
University***

Addressing poverty in Oregon is critical for individuals who are striving to succeed and support their families and for the state as a whole which benefits from people working, supporting themselves and their families, and feeling included in the larger society.

Poverty is sometimes viewed as a singular situation but in reality poverty plays out very differently for different groups of people. People in long term poverty are different from people in situational poverty. People from communities or groups where poverty is concentrated differ from people who are working but still poor, etc. (At the end of this testimony is a description four types of poverty.)

Therefore it makes sense to define and measure poverty that recognizes these differences and the disproportionate impact of poverty of communities of color. The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is an antiquated measure of poverty established in the 1960's. I am supporting SB 890 to form a Task Force on Measures of Economic and Social Success so that we can examine the differences and similarities experienced by different population groups experiencing poverty. One measure of poverty (FPL) is not sufficient to guide decision making. I don't support this effort just so we can have appropriate measures but because with this more sophisticated analysis of poverty we can make more effective decisions about strategies, policies, and resource allocations to alleviate poverty.

The outcomes from this Task Force will be 1) a recommendation for a more relevant set of measures and definitions for poverty and 2) recommendations for how these measures can impact policy and resource allocations including improving outcomes in current state practices and programs.

If this Task Force is formed it will have the benefit of a variety of resources. This is an important trend nationally. We are not alone in this endeavor. Other states have started using more relevant measures. For instance some jurisdictions (Wisconsin, California, New York City) have adopted the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS), a more comprehensive measure of poverty that addresses many of the limitations of the Federal Poverty Level.

We have funds already raised to engage Oregon's Kitchen Table, located at the National Policy Consensus Center, to do a consultation with the public about their values and assumptions about poverty and the way we should define it.

Four Kinds of Poverty (thanks to 2014 Poverty in Multnomah County, Department of Human Services):

- *Long-term poverty* is persistent and ongoing. It affects seniors, persons with disabilities, and other population groups whose options for exiting poverty through earned income are limited.
- *Situational poverty* is temporary or episodic. It is caused by a sudden or unexpected personal or economic crisis such as job loss, divorce, domestic violence, a death in the family, or severe health problems.
- *Economic poverty* is persistent economic instability that affects people whose wages and benefits are not sufficient to meet their household's basic needs.

- *Social poverty* occurs when individual, societal, or institutional barriers prevent people from accessing economic opportunities or fully participating in society.