



FAMILY SERVICE REVIEW COMMISSION

April 20, 2015

Dear House and Senate Human Services Committee Members:

On behalf of the Family Services Review Commission (FSRC), we ask your support for HB 3535, the TANF Reinvestment Bill.

The FSRC advises the Director of the Department of Human Services primarily on how to improve the experience of families utilizing self-sufficiency program like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). As commission members, we participated in the extensive community conversations that led to the proposals contained in HB 3535. These proposals, if funded, will set us on a path to transform TANF into a program that does more to support families' basic stabilization needs while at the same time supporting their efforts to become independent of public assistance.

Over the course of the recession, we saw TANF caseloads increase dramatically and the support services – especially those aimed at helping families find quality employment – dwindle. Coming out of the recession, the numbers of families needing TANF has decreased somewhat, but caseloads are still above pre-recession levels and there is a critical need to help families connect to, and benefit from, the strengthening economy.

The carefully considered proposed reinvestments of TANF will enhance the stability of our families while at the same time providing them the customized, person-centered, strengths-based case management and support services they need to successfully transition back into the workforce.

More specifically, the policy changes and strategies implemented through HB 3535 will: (1) help divert families from entering the TANF program; (2) address the “benefits cliff” that so often unnecessarily locks families into public assistance programs; and (3) create flexibility that allows DHS workers to fully leverage the capacities of the families they serve, as well as the resources and expertise of the of the other service providers in their communities.

HB 3535 represents the best thinking of scores of people who have received TANF, work with TANF families, and are involved in implementing the program. It is a genuinely exciting opportunity to significantly improve a program that is absolutely essential to thousands of Oregon's most vulnerable families.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tawna Sanchez
Co-Chair

Marc Jolin
Co-Chair