

## Department of County Human Services



To: Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the House Committee On Human Services and Housing

From: Liesl Wendt, Director - Multnomah County Department of Human Services

Date: April 20, 2015

RE: TANF Reinvestment Proposal, HB 3535

MEASURE: HB 3535  
EXHIBIT: 13  
HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING  
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SUBMITTED BY: Liesl Wendt

Multnomah County Human Services Department supports the Oregon State TANF Reinvestment Proposal.

As the Oregon economy and job outlook steadily improves, many low-income residents continue to endure barriers and challenges in their transition to stable work. Such obstacles include lack of education, lack of affordable housing, inadequate workforce development and limited access to affordable childcare and transportation. Concurrently, the existing state benefits package maintains a steep drop off when recipients begin to progress towards a stable income. This "benefits cliff" serves as a disincentive for populations in poverty trying to achieve financial self-sufficiency and stable futures. The proposed TANF Reinvestment provides a timely opportunity to reinvest in our most vulnerable families while continuing to enhance economic prosperity locally and statewide.

Multnomah County represents the state's smallest geographic county, but has the largest population center, comprising 20% of the state's population. Last year, the county had a disproportionately high 25% share of TANF basic caseloads statewide (7,013). As the largest recipients of TANF caseloads, our county and community has a vested interest in the TANF reinvestment proposal to help our most vulnerable families successfully achieve and maintain stable and healthy lifestyles as active contributors to the economy.

In Multnomah County, we recognize that decreasing poverty is a shared responsibility that no single organization can address in isolation. The Reinvestment Proposal provides a critical path to leverage our county funds in an effort to build critical mass and advance our progress toward economic recovery and safety net stabilization. Locally, the proposal strongly aligns with our goals to ensure more clients are employed and able to move out of poverty. In particular, Multnomah County's Department of County Human Services looks forward to the opportunity to align state and county resources in service of this broader goal--reducing poverty for our most vulnerable families.

As Director for Multnomah County Department of Human Services, I'm proud to stand with the advocates behind this important budget proposal. Serving as an active member on the planning committee, we extend our gratitude for the inclusive and collaborative redesign process and look forward to a continued partnership. For it is all of our responsibility to jointly support at-risk families and build a thriving community.