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House Rules Committee Testimony of John Mullin - HB 3535

May 8, 2015

Madame Chair, members of the Committee, I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 3535, which is a reinvestment in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

In 2007, during my first session with the Oregon Law Center, I had the opportunity to be involved in a bipartisan work group on HB 2469. Freshman Co-Chairs Reps Kotek and Maurer headed up the group, which included the Department of Human Resources and Erinn Kelley-Siel who at that time, worked for Governor Kulongoski. This effort produced what I like to call Oregon's TANF program, finally putting our values in place for a program that was block granted to states in 1996 as part of "welfare reform." Unfortunately, the recession that began in 2008 led to severe budget cuts in TANF.

I point this out because we learned from the experience of 2007 of the value of working together to craft bipartisan TANF legislation, this time to reinvest caseload savings back into program. Rep. Keny-Guyer asked her Co-Vice Chairs of House Human Services and Housing, Reps. Piluso and Stark, to head up the work group. Once again, I had the opportunity to participate in this important and inclusive process that led to the consensus embodied in the bill.

Simply put, HB 3535, with the amendment before you today, represents the hard work of your legislative colleagues, the Department of Human Services, and a wide variety of advocates. The bill, with the amendment, will help TANF recipients to return to work. This has two benefits – lower caseload costs, of course, but employment also leads to greater self-sufficiency for families. Moreover, every family gainfully employed contributes to the economic health of the state.

What the bill does:

- Helps families have a smoother transition to work by reducing the "benefits cliff"
- Provides flexible support services individualized for family needs
- Targets case management services to promote a strength based approach to assisting families
- Memorializes our progress since 1996 and aspires toward achieving important and measureable results for Oregon families in need now and in the future.

Over the course of the next biennium, we believe this timely reinvestment of caseload savings will lead to increasingly better results for family stability and success in the workforce.

Again, we urge your support of this important bill. Thank you for your consideration.

