



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 3535  
HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE  
MAY 8, 2015  
SUBMITTED BY  
PHILLIP KENNEDY-WONG

***Mission:***

*To eliminate  
hunger and its  
root causes. . .  
because no  
one should  
be hungry.*

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The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program is a vital part of Oregon's safety net. Not all families are created equal and not all families have access to the same resources when a parent experiences a job loss. Some families with greater difficulties in parenting, finding and maintaining employment, can put themselves and their children at risk.

The challenges of these parents might be the result of childhood abuse/neglect, a troubled adolescence, domestic violence, substance abuse, a disability, teen pregnancy, or debt. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is their safety net and for every family that finds themselves in unfortunate circumstances, providing help to stabilize their household, build life skills, and successfully enter the workforce. Without the program, these problems are exacerbated.

Regardless of a family's circumstances, their success and more importantly the future of their children depend on Oregon's commitment to rebuild the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. House Bill 3535 is the first step towards that. The bill reinvests \$30 million in key areas to maximize the program's ability to stabilize families and prepare them for employment.

In 2011-13 budget, JOBS Support Services were cut in half and have not been restored. This cut severely limited the ability of families to participate in vocational training and educational activities; and attend to personal needs such as counseling or similar appointments. This is because these activities require childcare and transportation. JOBS Support Services make it possible for families to improve their situation by higher participation. Many families were affected by this. In fact, the more vulnerable families suffered immeasurably, losing services as well as hope by staying on TANF longer than necessary.

House Bill 3535 is built around the goal of helping families avoid Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, both on the front end and the back end, thereby avoiding a more difficult and costly path to family stability. First, the bill creates flexibility for DHS to provide immediate cash assistance for a family to overcome a financial emergency. Doing so prevents from families falling further into poverty, possibly avoiding the need for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families altogether. Second, the bill incentivizes families to exit Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and not fear that low-wage employment will disqualify them from services immediately. This allows a family build a foundation that can set them up for long term prosperity.

Thank you for your consideration.