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STATEMENT
Commissioner Loretta Smith
Committee on Workforce and General Government
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Thank you, Chairman Dembrow, for this hearing today on SB 1526 by Senator Baertschiger, putting the state into the effort to provide quality summer jobs for young people around Oregon.

As a Commissioner, I have put a lot of my focus on building a summer job program in Multnomah County. Summer Jobs connects young people with quality jobs at good pay, and provides them the skills they need to make their lives better now and in the future.

I know firsthand the importance of these opportunities because that's how I got started in the world of work. I was a 16 year-old girl, in high school, and I probably didn't make more than about a dollar-something an hour helping my English teacher. But I treasured that money because it let me buy the clothes I wanted – though always with the oversight of my mother. And I appreciated being able to go through the a la carte lunch line instead of having to show my red free-and-reduced lunch card.

That money is long gone, but what stuck with me were the values I learned from working 10 hours a week on that first job. I learned about being on time, and about being held responsible and accountable for my actions.

Today about one in four young people between the age of 16 and 19 has a job. In the Portland Metro area, 36,000 young people are both out of school and out of work. When we look at the numbers for young African-American men, the employment rate is even grimmer – just 12%, one in eight, young African American men has a job. And as we all know, too many of those kids are dropping out of school, quitting community programs, and getting in trouble.

In Partnership with local businesses, the City of Portland, and Worksystems Inc., Multnomah County became a participant in Portland's SummerWorks program. We have grown the County's share of the program from 25 young people in the first year to 250 this year. In total, 672 summer internships were provided, with each paying the minimum wage of \$9.25 an hour. About 92% of these were in public and non-profit organizations, and about 8% in commercial businesses. The total budget for the program was \$1,908,469, of which \$525,635 came from Multnomah County, \$329,471 from the City of Portland, \$420,034 from Work Systems Inc. and the balance from other public and private sources. And, a recent study by Oregon State University found that summer jobs programs generate \$1.20 into the local economy for every dollar spent on youth wages.

It has been very hard work. Youth workforce development simply does not happen without champions in Government. Creating job opportunities can only occur through public and private collaboration, and by aligning our resources for collective results.

The essential point is that providing summer jobs to young people who could easily find themselves in trouble, is extremely inexpensive. Consider that the Multnomah County Sheriff's office, alone, spends \$30 million per year on juvenile justice programs. Law enforcement professionals will tell you all day long that keeping kids constructively engaged in a job or other positive programs gives us our best chance to get ahead of this profoundly difficult problem.

Recent research also suggests that summer jobs can help reduce violent behavior and crime. According to a report from The Hamilton Project, a think tank within the Brookings Institution, about a Boston study, "Preliminary results from an experimental evaluation of One Summer Plus—which combined summer jobs with a cognitive behavioral therapy-based program aimed at reducing youth violence—indicate that the program led to a large decrease in violent-crime arrests (Heller 2014). A study of a summer jobs program in Boston finds that, compared to a comparison group of eligible youth from the program waiting list, program participants were significantly more likely to reduce risky and violent behaviors, including the use of drugs and alcohol, physical fighting, damaging property, and threatening someone with a weapon (Sum, Trubskyy, and McHugh 2013). The program also created much-needed jobs for program participants, as just 27 percent of youth in the comparison group were able to find a summer job."

The report continues, "An experimental evaluation of the After School Matters—an after-school apprenticeship program for high school students during the school year in Chicago—found improvements in behavior and social and emotional development, although it found no effect on academic outcomes (Hirsch et al. 2011). Importantly, 91 percent of students in the comparison group in Chicago were involved in some other after-school activity (most common) or paid work, indicating that the availability of other opportunities (i.e., the counterfactual of what they would have done without the program) may differ considerably during the school year, and suggesting that the summer may be an especially promising time for such interventions."

The potential doubling of this effort, as envisioned by SB 1526, would make a tremendous difference for young people in Portland and across rural Oregon as well. Godspeed the passage of this legislation, and I thank you for the opportunity to appear today.
