

April 3, 2017

House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports
2017 Oregon State Legislature

Re: HB 3067

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Hack, Vice-Chair Piluso, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to personally support of HB 3067. Our comments represent our personal opinions and we are not representing the Oregon Judicial Department. In our view the proposed Court Care program offers an excellent opportunity to enhance the access to justice for families with children.

In our roles as circuit judges, we preside over all of the juvenile delinquency and dependency and forcible detainer and eviction cases for Polk County. We also preside over treatment courts for drug abuse and mental illness. We often hear family abuse prevention act cases as well as criminal cases. From this vantage point we see first-hand how the lack of short term drop in childcare impacts parent's and other participant's ability to fully participate in their cases.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for parents to bring their children to court. These are often very young children who have difficulty sitting still and being quiet. They distract from the process and impact other participant's ability to have their cases heard. Many of these parents are appearing without representation and therefore are forced to simultaneously pay attention to the proceedings and watch their children. It places them at a distinct disadvantage.

The difficulty in maintain a judicial decorum is, of course, the least of the problems created by having children in court. When a parent brings a child to court they are often exposed to traumatic details regarding their parent's case as well as other cases that may come before the court while they are waiting to have the case heard. Parents and the court are placed in an untenable position. We must either leave the children in the court room or have them wait unattended in the hall way.

The Court Care program established by HB 3067 protects children from witnessing traumatic court proceedings and allows litigants, advocates, and court staff to give their full attention to court business. It further improves access to justice for low-income families. The lack of affordable, quality childcare should not prevent parents and caregivers from complying with mandatory court appearances, obtaining a restraining order, challenging an eviction, or exercising their other legal rights. The Court Care

program established by HB 3067 will provide necessary childcare to allow parents and caregivers to access the courts.

For those reasons, we encourage you to pass HB 3067. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Circuit Court Judge Sally L. Avera



Circuit Court Judge Norman R. Hill