

## Department of County Human Services

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To: Co-Chairs Hass and Barnhart, and Members of the Joint Committee on Tax Reform

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

Date: June 13, 2017

RE: HB 2830

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Co-Chairs Hass and Barnhart, and Members of the committee, for the record my name is Liesl Wendt, Director of the Department of County Human Services in Multnomah County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.

The Department of County Human Services serves children in community schools and families in crisis who need help affording the basics. We also serve survivors of domestic violence, people with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities, older people, and Veterans.

We appreciate the committee's serious consideration of HB 2830 which would help keep Oregonians safe and able to reach their full potential.

Positive outcomes are built into the programs and services that foster well-being. Nearly three out of every four dollars we spend on services come from our state and federal partners. Multnomah County invests significant county resources to help fund these programs. We maximize resources and ensure high-quality service delivery.

Unfortunately, the current budget doesn't match our shared vision of Oregon.

Oregonians -- by birth or by choice -- are problem-solvers. When we see an opportunity, we figure out how to make the most of it. When we see that something isn't working, we collaborate to find solutions.

Human services cannot continue to struggle for stability and supports. Adequate and stable funding for programs that meet the goals of better quality of life, better care and lower costs must be preserved--and need to be expanded.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, here's what's at stake: unpredictable funding in an already stressed system, coupled with the possibility of losing

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regional crisis supports, creates a perfect storm. We risk putting Oregon's disability community, especially children with disabilities, in danger by eliminating essential services.

We support this proposal's long-term goal of making sure our children are well educated and can grow up to be successful stewards of our state. Safe and stable housing is foundational to this goal. However, the current funding for the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) means Multnomah County can only meet one in 14 requests for rental assistance. Without sufficient funding for housing we are jeopardizing our student's long-term success. But if we fund EHA and create housing stability, we are helping ensure the lives of children and our future leaders are bright.

Thankfully, we have a clear path. We can choose the Oregon way. We can embrace solutions we know work. We can create a stable funding stream and provide adequate consistent services. We can serve clients with developmental disabilities so they can remain safe and supported at home, work, and in the community.

The partnership between Multnomah County and the State of Oregon is vital. We have the tools to create a better future and to open doors for all Oregonians. We can harness our ingenuity, our talent and our energy. We can create a better future for the next generation. Having stable funding means keeping Oregonians safe and making the most of our potential as a state.