

To: Human Services and Housing Committee
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: January 29, 2019
Re: HB 2639 & HB 2626

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support of two bills to help mothers and their children during a crucial period of time. HB 2639 and HB 2626 are about ensuring our low income children and mothers have access to the nutrition they need.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to overcome poverty. Access to nutrition through the whole life span is a critical need OLC clients.

WIC serves pregnant moms and households with kids under the age of 5 at or below 185% of the federal poverty line. It improves the lives of pregnant women, families, infants, and young kids, and built a foundation for kids to thrive. Research has shown it has a direct impact on health outcomes for women and their children.

WIC-to-Kindergarten ([HB 2639](#))

Currently 10,000 children are left without nutrition assistance once they turn 5, but before they enter kindergarten. We could fix this gap by allowing eligibility until a child enters kindergarten.

Extending nutrition benefits for moms 2 years postpartum ([HB 2626](#))

The nutrition needs of mothers doesn't stop in the year after a child is born. Extending WIC for 2 years postpartum can help reduce toxic stress for young families and provide a healthier foundation. HB 2626 would have a positive impact on 17,000 families across Oregon.

HB 2639 and HB 2626 are important improvements to the WIC program and would have health benefits for thousands of families.