

Subject: Support HB 3183 - Addressing Barriers Facing Families on TANF

To: Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Noble and all the members of House Committee on Human Services and Housing.

From: Central City Concern

Date:

Central City Concern (CCC) is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,000 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually and operates social services for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. This year we are celebrating 40 years of service to our communities.

A recent review of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program showed that families who are on TANF longest or who cycle through often are more likely to have an untreated or undertreated substance use disorder or mental health condition. This means investments in family treatment services could have a net positive effect for the state on stabilizing families on TANF for the long-term.

As wages have stagnated for many working people, full-time work at minimum wage or even up \$15 an hour isn't enough to support an individual let alone a family. In Oregon, \$15 an hour at full-time would still keep an individual below 60% of the area median income, and below 50% of the area median for a family of 4. For reference we consider "workforce housing" to start at 60% of the area median income, this housing is usually subsidized by both state and federal tax credit programs. It isn't until someone starts to make \$20 an hour that they are able to be competitive in their local housing market. This means that if we want people to be able to roll off TANF and not be in danger of falling back into deep poverty we must be focusing on careers not jobs.

Programs like CCC's Family Housing and Employment Access Center have, for years, created wraparound and integrated programs to ensure families have access to housing, health care and employment. We have made it our mission to piece together the programs and funding so that clients don't have to. However, CCC does not operate statewide, programs like ours are not always available in other parts of the state. That is why we are advocating for HB 3183, calling for this service integration investment coupled with upcoming housing investments should be part of new state plans to address homelessness and deep poverty.

To exit TANF and achieve long-term housing and economic self-sufficiency, HB 3183 bridges multiple supports for clients based on individual needs and service plans. The required range of supports fall into three categories:

- Training and employment to attain job placements at wages sufficient to support a family, and thus avoid the "benefit cliff,"

- Affordable housing that gives residents time to strengthen skills, education and work history as they transition from Section 8 subsidized housing or transitional housing to full market rate apartments or homeownership and
- Behavioral health services, for families in recovery from trauma, domestic violence, addiction, and homelessness.

HB 3183 takes an important step forward to bridge and braid services that have long been disconnected and inconsistent. Families that are battling extreme poverty should be able to have access to all the components needed to develop stability, and these services should work together under one umbrella. We ask you to support HB 3183.

Thank you,

Mercedes Elizalde
Central City Concern
Public Policy Director