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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 385A  
Custody and Parenting Time Dispute Resolution  
Before the House Judiciary Committee**

**May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 385A. I was a member of the Custody and Parenting Time Legislative Workgroup that met during this past interim, of which this bill is a product. I thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

OLC is a statewide non-profit law firm whose mission is to provide access to justice for the low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Because we are not able to help all who qualify for our services, we prioritize the provision of assistance to the neediest Oregonians – the lowest of income, the most vulnerable. The single most frequent request for help from our offices is in the area of family law. Often, our clients are struggling to escape domestic violence. Rarely are the issues facing our clients more compelling than when parents seek our assistance in establishing safety and stability for themselves and their children in the aftermath of a separation. In all cases, we look for outcomes that, tailored to the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved, will enable the children to thrive. It is through this lens that my testimony is provided regarding the bills before the committee this morning.

Senate Bill 385A allows the presiding judge in each judicial district to establish an informal alternative dispute resolution conference process for the resolution of custody and parenting time modification or enforcement disagreements. The intent of the program is to ensure that parents have access to tools they can use to avoid litigation, thus hopefully reducing conflict and expense for all. The bill contains provisions to address situations in which there are safety concerns between the parties, and requires training of the conference officers. If the parties are unable to reach agreement in the conference, they may proceed to court. This bill is in keeping with the principle that parents who can agree on the nature and structure of their parenting plans tend to follow them better and with less conflict for children. The bill was amended on the Senate side to ensure that family abuse prevention act proceedings are not subject to alternative dispute resolution conferences, due to the immediacy of safety concerns involved. For these reasons, we support the bill.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify before you.