



June 25, 2020

Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4212

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Vice Chair Girod, Co-Vice Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee:

In 2020, after working in partnership for three years, Children First for Oregon (CFFO) and The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon (CTFO) merged to form **Our Children Oregon (OCO)**. OCO's mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. We elevate data and the voices of communities to amplify the need and collaboratively develop policy and public investments to improve overall child and family well-being across the state. We continue to convene the Children's Agenda, a partnership of 120 organizations, looking at the holistic needs of children.

As you are convened in special session to address the critical issues facing our state as we respond to COVID-19 and the systemic racism inherent in our police systems, we focus our testimony today on some of the elements of HB 4212 that we support:

- Establishment of the **Low-Income Utility Payment Fund** to help low-income families with utility bill assistance, is important to help with economic stability.
- The proposed changes around **Individual Development Account (IDA) flexibility** would establish a savings category for emergency expenses to promote financial stability and to protect existing assets. It would also clarify some language around the repayment of funds taken out for an emergency by making guidelines less punitive. This would allow IDA savers to have their own funds matched with Initiative dollars to respond to critical financial needs during a period of financial hardship such as unemployment, medical leave, or economic downturn.
- COVID-19 has elevated the need for timely disaggregated health data, and we are glad to see the proposed language around **Race and Ethnicity Data Collection for COVID-19 testing** (included in LC 45 and LC 84). Given the large race/ethnicity disparities reported by the [Oregonian last week](#) showing that "with 145 new cases among Black, indigenous and people of

color and 57 among Whites. That roughly 70/30 split in new cases is the opposite of the county's population, which is roughly 70% White and 30% people of color. Latinx residents account for about 11% of the county's population but 33% of its cases," it is critical that we require the collection of race and ethnicity data.

We ask you at this moment to center the children of Oregon and to make the best decisions to ensure an equitable recovery.

Let's reimagine the world we want to live in and make it real with each decision we make!

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Jenifer Wagley
Executive Director

Chris Coughlin
Legislative Director