



Oregon Department of Justice

Ellen F. Rosenblum, Attorney General
Lisa M. Udland, Deputy Attorney General

Division of Child Support

1162 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: (503) 947-4388
Fax: (503) 947-2578
TTY: (800) 735-2900
oregonchildsupport.gov

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 186 For the Senate Committee on Human Services March 6, 2023

Presented by:

**Kate Cooper Richardson, Director
Oregon Child Support Program
Division of Child Support
Department of Justice
*kate.richardson@doj.state.or.us***

This testimony is presented in support of Senate Bill 186.

How This Bill Changes Current Law

Currently, when a parent receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) through the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), by state law the parent must assign their right to receive any child support to the State of Oregon as reimbursement. However, from any child support collected by the Oregon Child Support Program through the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) each month, the family can receive \$50 for each child, up to a maximum of \$200 per family. These are called “pass-through” payments. Senate Bill 186 amends ORS 25.020 to allow DOJ to remove that limit and pass through *all* child support collected in the month it is due to families receiving TANF.

To avoid unintended consequences related to other benefits, this bill also amends ORS 412.007, requiring ODHS to “disregard” child support as income for purposes of determining whether a family is eligible to receive TANF. The current disregard amount correlates to the current pass-through amount, \$50 of the amount of child support received for each child per month, up to a total of \$200.

This legislation is an important policy advancement for the Oregon Child Support Program and for the ODHS TANF program. It will bring more support to low-income families to cover essentials like children’s food, clothes, and school supplies. Research supports this approach as more effective at lifting families out of poverty and toward self-sufficiency. It also has the potential to strengthen family relationships and increase the number of parents who pay their support on time when the parent knows the child support is going directly to their children—not the government. Colorado, Michigan, and Minnesota already pass through all current support, and several other states are also moving in this direction, including Washington and California.

Goals of Legislation

- Passing through current support to families has been shown to help lift families out of poverty more quickly, reducing their reliance on other public services.¹
- This legislation will put more direct support in the hands of Oregonians and more money into our local economy.

Benefits to Oregon Families

This legislation strengthens families and promotes self-sufficiency by encouraging the timely payment of child support and placing direct support in the hands of low-income families.

- On average, around 2,000 families receive pass-through payments each month.
- Under the current law, these payments average around \$60 per month.
- Based on historical collections, upon enacting this bill, these families could receive an average of \$300 per month—money that is *already* being paid by the other parent but is currently retained by the government.

Recommended Action

The Oregon Department of Justice recommends committee approval of Senate Bill 186 to help lift low-income families out of poverty.

¹ Laura Wheaton and Elaine Sorensen. “[The Potential Impact of Increasing Child Support Payments to TANF Families](#)” www.urban.org, The Urban Institute, December 2007.