

Opening Remarks
HECHS 2/5/24
Rep. Lisa Reynolds, MD

Good Afternoon

I call to order the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services on the first day of the short session of the 82nd legislative assembly.

It is Monday February 5, 2024 and it is 1:xx o'clock.

We have some work before us and not much time in which to complete it. In short, we have 8 bills to consider. We will take our first 3 meetings to hold public hearings on this bill, and then devote two hearings on work sessions for the 8 bills. Of course, this is all subject to change! We anticipate just one bill from the Senate Committee on Human Services, as most bills, including any that we pass out of this committee, will be headed to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, via the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services.

After we complete our "bill work", we plan to still gather so that we can continue to learn about the work and the outcomes our committee is tasked with overseeing. Feel free to suggest topics for these informationals, but do it soon.

I've mentally put the bills before us in a few different baskets. And, it certainly strikes me that ALL of these bills aim to help our fellow Oregonians, with an emphasis on those who are among the most needy and where our help, our state's support, can make a significant difference.

So, we have two measures, HB 4159 from Vice Chair Nguyen, and our committee bill HB 4085, which provide directed support to our immigrant neighbors, facilitating a path where they can find some stability and safety, and will be able to work and then become citizens. We will be holding public hearings on both of these bills today, and HB

And our early childhood hat brings us my personal bill, HB 4105, which helps pregnant people and, then, their babies. We'll hear great stories on this service today.

This work is why I love the fusion of Early Childhood with Human Services. As we focus our energies on how to truly shine the spotlight and meet the needs of our youngest constituents, we can prevent child welfare involvement, we can markedly decrease the need for foster care, we can, I believe, increase the number of Oregonians who are fully employed in meaningful work, making family wages.

On Wednesday, Early Childhood also brings us HB 4158, from Vice Chair Nguyen, which seeks funds to support the in-home daycares that are the backbone of our childcare system. Remember childcare is the work that allows all other work to happen, and access to childcare builds wealth for families.

Speaking of building wealth for families, Wednesday also brings us Rep Ruiz's HB 4131, seeking more resources for Individual development accounts.

And, we need ODHS to think about better and different ways to serve those in need. And so, we will hear a proposal for how to care for our highest needs youth, those who have been at risk for the temporary lodging that we've covered so much in the interim during legislative days. This is committee bill HB 4087.

AND, next week, we are revisiting the topic of agency with choice, a proposed modernization of how we provide care for our aging population. Finally, HB 4086, our third committee bill, seeks to clarify and streamline our process of investigating the abuse of children by standing up a robust work group. Or task force.

Thank you again, colleagues, for bringing your heart and your brain to this important work. We need all of us working together to make Oregon the best state in the country in which to grow up.