

Testimony for HB 3011

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development Chair Representative
Zach Hudson

Dear Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cat Luna, and I am a single mother of three living in Eugene, Oregon. I am currently a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in social work from Portland State University. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3011, a bill that I believe will significantly benefit families in need across Oregon.

I grew up in Salem, Oregon, as the youngest of nine children in a low-income family. Having experienced generational poverty firsthand, I have been determined to break the cycle for my children. When I began my academic journey, I participated in the Head Start Program for the Salem/Keizer school district. My oldest child started the program when he was five years old, and my other two children followed in his footsteps. Each of my children enjoyed the many resources that Head Start had to offer.

As a single, low-income parent, the Head Start Program and its dedicated staff, teachers, and family advocates were instrumental in supporting my family during challenging times. With their assistance, I applied for funding to take my GED tests and successfully obtained my GED. This support enabled me to begin college courses at my local community college. I also served on the Policy Council during all three of my children's time in Head Start, where I learned about policymaking and advocacy.

My academic journey continued as I pursued an undergraduate degree in Psychology, with minors in Planning, Public Policy, and Management, as well as Nonprofit Administration. I have worked for a nonprofit that helps women over 35 pursue postsecondary degrees through scholarship grants, many of whom are also parenting young children while pursuing their education. Currently, I work at a local nonprofit in Eugene that focuses on parenting education to help prevent the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Now, as I pursue a master's degree in social work at PSU, I am committed to influencing policy in areas that impact families and helping them better access resources to thrive. HB 3011 will provide the crucial head start needed for upward mobility for countless families in need. The preventative impact of this bill will yield long-term fiscal benefits for our communities in Oregon, resulting in healthier families—mentally, emotionally, and physically.

I urge you to consider my story as a testament to the positive impact that early childhood education programs have on families. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cat Luna