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State Representative, House District 50
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March 27, 2019

RE: House Bill 2244

Chair Williamson and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Carla Piluso and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham.

I'm here today in support of HB 2244 with the -2 amendment, which continues and expands Oregon's CourtCare pilot. The -2 amendment is a gut-and-stuff. We'll be advocating for adoption of that amendment rather than the base bill today.

For those who aren't familiar, CourtCare provides free, high-quality childcare to parents who are taking care of business in and around courthouses. I consider this program to be a win-win-win for Oregonians. It's good for children, because it spares them from witnessing adult conflict and potentially traumatizing scenes in court. It's good for parents, because it provides sorely needed one-time childcare and removes barriers to attending court. And it's good for courts and institutions, because it removes the potential disruption of children in court, and makes it easier for clients to make their appointments—meaning the whole process runs smoother.

I first saw CourtCare in action decades ago as a Gresham police officer. In Multnomah County, we are able to fund our CourtCare program mainly through philanthropic dollars. But of course, most counties are not Multnomah County—and for decades, our program was the only one in Oregon.

In 2017, the Legislature took a step towards expanding CourtCare by funding pilot programs in Polk County and Marion County. You'll hear in later testimony about how that investment has paid off over the past two years, for parents, kids, judges, lawyers, and courts.

We now have the chance to build on that investment. HB 2244-2 will continue funding CourtCare in Polk and Marion counties, and add Jackson County, where these services are sorely needed. The three counties will be required to meet standards of care, provide matching funds, and collect data about how the program is working. Otherwise, they have flexibility to run a program that works in their context—because we know that if you ask the 36 Oregon counties what works best for them, and you'll get 36 different answers.

This bill also looks to the future of CourtCare. It establishes a task force that will evaluate how the program is working now, and research a stable method of funding CourtCare on a statewide scale.

We know that two things are true across our state: that there is a serious need for affordable childcare, and that courts are severely overburdened by all we ask them to do. CourtCare is a solution that works for families and for courts, and I ask for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carla Piluso', written in a cursive style.

Carla C. Piluso
Oregon State Representative, House District 50