



# FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Smart policies for today's families.

April 4, 2019

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1035

Family Caregiver Respite

Submitted by Courtney Helstein on behalf of Family Forward Oregon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 1035. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. Our mission is to create a family-friendly Oregon where all families can be economically secure and have the time they need to take care of each other. We believe all Oregonians should be able to provide care for their family without risking their economic security or their own wellbeing. We urge strong support of SB 1035 which will provide greatly needed respite for the more than 470,000 unpaid family givers in Oregon.<sup>1</sup>

Oregon's care economy is largely unseen and underinvested. In Oregon, \$5.7 billion in care is provided every year by unpaid family caregivers.<sup>2</sup> Spanning from the very first days of one's life to the very last days, it includes all of the work involved in taking care of children, seniors, and people living with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

With the baby boomer generation getting older, demand for senior care is quickly rising, as is the cost of that care. Though subsidies for a homecare worker or a room in a nursing home may be available through Medicare or Medicaid, they typically don't cover the total cost of high-quality care, and they may not be available to all families in need. This is putting severe financial and emotional stress on seniors and their families.

The majority of all caregivers, both paid and unpaid, are women. According to the AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving report, 60% of caregivers are women with an average age of 49. The report also identifies that in addition to their family caregiving responsibilities, 56% of caregivers work full time. This presents a unique challenge to our workforce: caregivers report having to make various accommodations to balance caregiving responsibilities with work responsibilities. This can include cutting back hours, taking a leave of absence, or early retirement.<sup>3</sup> This means many are also forced to rely on government assistance to make ends meet even while working. Without expanded public investments in Oregon's care economy, like SB 1035, caregivers will continue to experience economic insecurity and emotional stress as a result of the unpaid care they provide and their inability to take a break from providing that care.

Allowing unpaid family caregivers to get some respite – breaks from providing constant care – will lead to better care for their loved ones without risking their financial security.

### **We believe in supporting family caregivers and investing in Oregon's**

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<sup>1</sup> *Improving Caregiver Respite Services in Oregon*. Report from the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group. November 2, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid



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**care economy. Family Forward Oregon urges your support for SB 1035.**