TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 5012
For the Public Safety Subcommittee
Joint Ways & Means Committee
April 14, 2021

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 offered in support of the budget for the Oregon Judicial Department (House Bill 5012) and Policy Option Package 103, Improve Outcomes for Children and Families.

Partnership with the Oregon Child Support Program Brings Federal Funds

The Oregon Child Support Program is the state's federal Title IV-D program and is administered by the Oregon Department of Justice Division of Child Support. The mission and work of Title IV-D agencies are supported by a 2-for1 federal match for every state dollar invested—66% federal funding, known as federal financial participation (FFP). The FFP is available as a continuous grant to states to reimburse for all eligible activities that further the mission of the child support program. That federal reimbursement is either directly delivered to the state Title IV-D agency or passed through to a sub-recipient—such as the Oregon Judicial Department.

Policy Option Package 103 would leverage General Fund dollars with 66% FFP to significantly improve child support services in the court system, the Oregon Child Support Program, and for families.

Centralized Court Services for Child Support Helps Families

Court facilitators offer direct support for self-represented parents—the majority of participants in the child support program. Court facilitators for child support can help parents select the appropriate forms for their situation, complete them correctly, and avoid the creation of multiple child support orders which cause confusion, delay, and expense.

Moving toward centralized adjudication of child support cases brings efficiency for both the courts and the Oregon Child Support Program, while improving the outcomes for families. Some county

circuit courts offer a "child support docket day," but resources and approach vary across the state. A centralized "problem-solving" approach for IV-D child support cases increases uniformity and quality of equitable outcomes, develops adjudicator expertise in child support guidelines and law, removes barriers for families in need of accessible and timely resolution, and alleviates pressure on other demanding court dockets.

As an inherently legal domestic relations program, a IV-D child support agency is inextricably linked with the courts, and the families must navigate both systems. Many other states use federal Title IV-D funds (FFP) to help pay for child support services within their court systems, and it is time for Oregon to take advantage of this federal assistance as well. The Department of Justice and Oregon Child Support Program are eager to work with the Oregon Judicial Department to bring those benefits to Oregon's children and families—and to further the program's mission of supporting parents to support their children and OJD's mission to provide accessible justice services that preserve community welfare.

POP 103 is Win-Win-Win-Win for Oregon

➢ Win for the Oregon Judicial Department to improve access and support in a high-need area
➢ Win for the DOJ and Oregon Child Support Program because it expands the reach and services of the program, improving outcomes for families
➢ Win for the state of Oregon because it brings more federal funding to provide better services for domestic relations cases
➢ Win for the families of Oregon who need prompt, fair, and accessible child support services to help them provide for their children and achieve self-sufficiency

Recommended Action

The Oregon Department of Justice and Oregon Child Support Program recommend approval of Policy Option Package 103 for House Bill 5012.