



Testimony for SB 694

Dear members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

I am pleased to provide testimony in support of SB 694. It is an essential element to address the significant challenges that local families with young children face today. It supports them in a way that recognizes that parents are generally the best people to make good day-to-day decisions for their families.

As an agency with more than 50 staff who directly support children and families with early childhood services, parenting education, occupational therapy and behavioral health services, we see daily the impact of high housing costs, poverty and many other stressors that young families face. With targeted funding and strong relationships with supportive services families can thrive despite their daily challenges.

The expansion of the federal child tax credit during the pandemic cut child poverty by 46% to a record low of 5.2% nationally. Oregon had a 46.3% decrease in child poverty with this expansion.

Since the end of the tax credit, we have seen a significant increase in food poverty. During November and December 2024 we stepped up our emergency food supplies for families in response to the need and are working this year to keep this additional service up to reduce the stress on families.

Children growing up in low and very low income families are more likely to have worse health outcomes than children born into higher income families. These disparities worsen into adulthood as we all have seen in the long-term ACES studies.

Poverty is an important determinant of birthweight, infant mortality, social emotional and language development, nutrition, chronic illness, environmental exposure, and injury.

Toxic stress associated with child poverty has detrimental effects on neurodevelopment.



Old Mill Center
for Children & Families

Agencies like ours work directly with families who are faced with poverty daily. The increase in the child tax credit will be a great boost to families and will allow them to live to their potential.

Your support for SB 694 will lift up local families and allow them to support their children with reduced stress from the economic pressures of high housing costs, lower wages and higher food prices. This investment is a preventative investment with savings across the education, health and justice sectors long-term. It will ensure a brighter future for Oregon's children and families. It will help agencies like ours to focus on higher level support services rather than emergency supports as families have a more secure economic footing.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bettina Schempf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Bettina Schempf
Executive Director