

February 10, 2025

TO: House Committee on Revenue

FROM: Grace Fortson, Our Children Oregon

SUBJECT: Support for HB 2958, Strengthening the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Grace Fortson, I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager with Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO is a statewide nonprofit committed to whole child wellbeing through the Children's Agenda- a comprehensive legislative agenda created and supported by our over 135 member organizations across the state.

I am here to represent not only my own personal support of strengthening the EITC, but also the support of our entire Children's Agenda coalition who voted to prioritize this bill as a key way to support children and families this legislative session.

I would like to start with a personal story. I went to university in Portland, Oregon. During my studies, I worked part-time in addition to completing paid and unpaid internships to gain valuable hands-on experience. While I started my journey in higher education with some financial support from a parent, by the end of college, I was taking on the whole of the financial responsibility myself. Though I would hope that we all agree that financially supporting youth getting an education is a good thing for our state, our youth, and our economy, the EITC was not available to me at that time. This reality is true for

many working students and young adults between the ages of 18–25 who are currently excluded from the EITC.

This age group is often undertaking one of life's biggest transitions – moving out of family's/guardian's house. I invite the committee to recall what it was like to fill your fridge and pantry for the first time in your first home. Spices were probably much more expensive than you thought, right? Even if the amount I received from the EITC (had I been eligible) was simply enough to cover that first grocery visit, it would have made an enormous impact.

An even greater impact of HB 2958 is directed toward children and families. The federal EITC currently serves to lift 34,000 Oregonian children out of poverty, with the state EITC impacting even more youth. Reducing poverty for children is an incredible upstream investment for the wellbeing of our state. Research demonstrates that “effects of poverty on physiologic and neurobiologic development are likely central to poverty-related gaps in academic achievement and the well-documented lifelong effects of poverty on physical and mental health.”¹

Support for youth through the EITC now means decreased need for costly education and health interventions later. Additionally, the rural families in particular are more likely to qualify for the EITC meaning that rural children will especially benefit from this expansion. **Increasing state match of the federal EITC means healthier and more secure Oregonians, from youth to older adults all across our state. We urge support for HB 2958.**

¹ [https://www.academicpedsjnl.net/article/S1876-2859\(16\)00026-7/fulltext](https://www.academicpedsjnl.net/article/S1876-2859(16)00026-7/fulltext)

Thank you,

Grace Fortson, Policy and Advocacy Manager, Our Children Oregon

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