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**EMERGENCY
BUSINESS**

DATE: May 19, 2011
TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Human Services Subcommittee
RE: HB 2049, relating to public assistance for families with dependent children

Committee Members:

The Lane County Board of Commissioners has reviewed HB 2049 and asks that the Committee **not** make any changes to the lifetime limits for eligibility to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) as outlined in section 5 of this measure. Reducing access to this program is short-sighted, and will only serve to put additional barriers in front of families that are working towards self-sufficiency.

We understand that the Governor's proposed budget suggests an even more draconian shortening of the eligibility, from five years to eighteen months. This would make Oregon's TANF program the shortest of any in the nation.

Oregon's TANF program currently provides cash assistance to 3,465 children living in Lane County. It is a basic safety net in our community, allowing families to meet the basic needs of their children. Unfortunately, data shows that the financial picture for families with children in Lane County is getting worse, rather than better:

- The number of children in poverty (ages 0-17) increased by 6% from 2009 to 2010.
- Over half the children (53.7%) in public schools were eligible to receive free/reduced price lunches during the school year.
- Lane County's median family income of \$57,500 is 7% lower than the state median.

The Lane Workforce Partnership is Lane County's contractor for the Department of Human Service's JOBS Program. As principal contractor, Lane Workforce Partnership coordinates either directly or subcontracts with local community service organizations to provide a core of mandatory service components to meet DHS performance outcomes. One of the measurements of success is job placements leading to TANF closure.

Reducing the lifetime eligibility for TANF will only push people towards further public assistance, rather than giving them the help they need to permanently participate in society in a positive way. We can't see that reducing TANF to as little as 18 months will lead to any outcome other than increasing costs for the state, and we urge the Committee to reject any language reducing the current five year eligibility.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY ALEX CUYLER ON BEHALF OF THE LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.