



# Health Department

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February 27, 2019

House Committee on Human Services and Housing  
900 Court St. NE - HR 50  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2626 - Relating to nutrition assistance for low income families

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Sanchez, and members of the Committee, my name is Kathleen Humphris and I am the Maternal, Child, and Family Health Nutrition Program Manager for Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB 2626.

This bill, including its clarifying amendment, extends availability of WIC services to mothers of children up to the child's second birthday. The bill is based on the reality that women who are eligible for WIC services need the extra months' of support to regain vital nutritional stores and their health status after giving birth. This bill is intended to support postpartum women long enough for them to regain their nutritional health after a pregnancy.

This bill is an excellent way to protect women of childbearing age by supporting their nutritional health after pregnancy and during the interbirth interval. Pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding take a toll on a woman's health and it often takes several years for a woman's nutritional reserves to reach pre-pregnancy levels.

WIC can easily help with this by extending the time when a postpartum woman receives the food benefits and the nutritional advice and referrals that WIC provides. Moreover, women of color in the US, particularly African American women, have significantly higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality related to pregnancy and birth. Participation in WIC reduces that risk.

Additionally, this change in availability of nutrition support to lower-income moms may have multiplying influences. Often it is a patchwork of services that make the biggest difference for families' health and social success. Adding WIC to a combination of other supportive services, such as good healthcare, public health nursing, mental health

services and early childhood services, will improve health outcomes and health equity in our State.

This bill builds upon the existing capacity of the local WIC programs and is therefore a bargain financially. Oregon's WIC programs have the capacity to continue services for the WIC mothers up to 24 months. This bill would increase the caseload of the County WIC programs, our programs have capacity to accommodate the number of women that would remain in the program for the extra time proposed.

Thank you.

Kathleen Humphries, PhD  
MCFH Nutrition Manager  
Multnomah County Public Health.