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data that if Oregonians can get a high school diploma and a GED and a bachelor's degree, they're going to be much more likely to be employed than if they don't have any of the above. So why would you punish people for doing what makes them successful in the economy? Allow more time for education. Give credit for partial participation in work-related activities. For example, this week I ran into three high school and college students looking for internships at my office. They could work part-time at a Starbucks, but they know that internship experience is much more valuable in terms of learning and in terms of resume building. Why wouldn't you give people on TANF who are volunteering credit for that work experience? So we made some really specific recommendations that we think the feds need to look at to provide more flexibility or common sense than the system currently allows. I think families — whether they're middle income or higher income — get common sense, and these were common sense recommendations.

J.Z.: What about raising the income threshold? It's currently \$617 for a parent of two. Anything above that gets you kicked off TANF.

K.B.: The auditors can make recommendations; it's one of my jobs to

make sure the recommendations get implemented. The governor's Prosperity Initiatives specifically mentions this "income cliff." I think we have a consensus that this must be fixed. I'm assuming the agency is working on specifics in its budget that will address it in the upcoming legislative session and I'm assuming it's on the

governor's radar screen as well. I think we've reached a tipping point on this and people get it. There's a punishment essentially, to Oregon TANF clients who get minimum wage jobs. They lose their TANF, and they're worse off than where they were. It doesn't make any sense. It's a disincentive for

people to get minimum wage work.

J.Z.: The state has undergone several self-evaluations of its bureaus, including low-income health care delivery and housing. How will this report have an impact on how the state conducts housing and health care operations, and how it all works together?

K.B.: I think it's really a push to state agencies to start working across silos. That's been the move that Gov. Kitzhaber has pushed with this 10-year budget plan. They're starting to share stories. That needs to happen in a much more data-driven and conscious way. Washington State does it. If they can do it in Washington State, we should be doing it in Oregon. There needs to be more data sharing in ways that help

us, and more evidence based practices across silos.

J.Z.: Advocates for people experiencing poverty say they're concerned that the response goes in the other direction — enforcing time limits, ramping up requirements and pushing people off the roles. You make the numbers look good, but the people aren't better off.

K.B.: The audit highlights some very successful programs in Oregon, and some very successful folks, such as Tabatha Bielemeier. She's highlighted in the report and she's a contractor with TANF. She's been very successful in placing clients because she had high expectations. So we want to be able to replicate the great work she's doing. We want to be able to replicate best practices. I think we've got some great things happening around the state in terms of the TANF program. We need to adequately fund the TANF program and its wraparound services. That would be my push back. People can't be successful unless you fund the services that they need to be successful.

J.Z.: Do you have a number in mind?

K.B.: No.

J.Z.: You've announced that you are hiring 160 more caseworkers.

K.B.: 162. Yes, that's huge. That was planned as a result of budget change of the 2013 Legislature.

J.Z.: That's got to have a big impact.

K.B.: Totally. So if you're serving 200 families, and then you're serving 80 or 90, you can spend a lot more time with those families and set very clear expectations.

TANF's heavy load

■ TANF enrollment in Oregon has increased dramatically, to more than 110,600 in July 2012. However, TANF expenditures have not changed. Unlike other federal entitlement programs, federal funds for the TANF program are capped. That means that when demand increases, the state must either add state funds or decrease services in order to serve more individuals and families.

■ In order to meet the recent increase in demand, the 2011 Oregon Legislature cut funding to the JOBS employment and training program, which is part of TANF, and prioritized limited services to the most job-ready families. The program's childcare subsidy was discontinued and mental health care funding was cut.

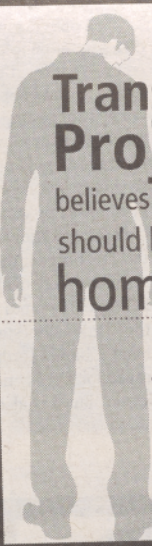
■ To cover payments, Oregon general fund expenditures on TANF rose from \$166 million in 2007-09 to \$254 million in 2013-15, a 53 percent increase. With case growth, the total monthly spending per family dropped from about \$800 to less than \$600.

■ Workload for case managers nearly doubled, up to 200 families per case manager in some cases. At that level, the auditors estimate that case managers have fewer than 40 minutes a month to work with each family.

Wandering Beggars

by Vicky Franklin

Wandering Beggars
Parasite to this host called "Society"
Stigmatized as the Anonymous
No acknowledgement
Plague the public with the audacity to "Ask"
"Do you have or Can I have"
Your money and leftovers....
Isn't that what they consider us
Leftovers...
Seasoned with debris, laying on cement pavements
For us the hardest season is winter
But the people who stereotype us are the coldest ever
Assumed reasons for our conditions
Their conclusion
We are metropolitan exclusions
Write us off... the streets
Implement public policies
Criminalize us for ruining the scenery
Occupy land use as our bedding
Tenants of public space, eminent domain
Lack resources, so we do what we can to be self-sustained
We are people who are homeless
Doesn't mean that we are not human
But to society we are referred to everything that is offensive
If we wasn't why do lawmakers make laws to apprehend us
All we have left is our dignity
And we fight for that each day
Despite the stares and rude comments
as the public walk pass as if were not even there
but don't get us wrong, I know some care
Menu for today is bitten off sandwiches
backwashed sodas
This isn't the life that We chose
Do you hear the cry of the Wanderers
with no fixed abode...



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