



Oregon Network of
Child Abuse
Intervention
Centers

February 25, 2019

Co Chair Beyer
Co Chair Nosse

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers
1827 NE 44th Ave., Suite 220
Portland, OR 97213

RE: Invest in DHS Child Welfare

The Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers (CAICs) is a collaborative network of 21 Centers, serving all 36 counties, dedicated to ensuring quality, comprehensive services for all of Oregon's children who have concerns of abuse and/or neglect. CAICs provide medical exams, forensic interviews, trauma-informed therapy, family support, and prevention services to children who may have been impacted by abuse. While each CAIC responds to the unique needs of its community, all CAICs across the state receive referrals by law enforcement and child welfare professionals.

The Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division is a crucial partner of ours. Caseworkers observe forensic interviews, use medical recommendations in case planning, and partner by serving on multidisciplinary teams in each county. Oftentimes, particularly in rural areas, visiting a CAIC is one of a caseworker's first on-the-job training experiences. Even our Oregon Child Forensic Interview Training (OCFIT), a program traveling statewide, serves more caseworkers than any other category of participants. High quality, well-trained, and retained caseworkers make a huge difference in the lives of many of Oregon's children.

When caseloads are high or caseworkers turnover, referral to our CAICs decline. This means, investigation and prosecution is less effective and most tragically, children are denied services that reduce unnecessary re-traumatization in the system. When access is denied, these children may not receive a specialized forensic interview or medical service, or may receive services from under qualified professionals. In their time of highest need, children should be consistently supported with highly effective, expert care that is often driven by dedicated and skilled caseworkers.

In an Oregon fighting to reduce addictions, housing instability, chronic physical and mental health diagnoses, criminality, economic instability, teen suicide, unintended pregnancy, etc., we urge you to address the root cause of these issues—child abuse and neglect. Measured in the adverse childhood

experiences (ACES) study, child maltreatment has been tied to each of these outcomes. Make no mistake, these cruel outcomes are often spurred by abuse and sustained through untreated trauma.

Additionally, these issues impact all Oregonians.

Creating a prosperous Oregon with more hope and less heartache will rely on the investments and decisions made for our young residents today.

Toward this vision, we encourage the Legislature to approve a much more robust allocation for DHS Child Welfare in the next biennium in an effort to increase caseworker training and retention, and to decrease caseload burden. Every child impacted by abuse deserves the opportunity to enter adulthood safe, healing, and hopeful. Increased investments for these youth will get us closer to this goal.

Sincerely,

Becky Jones
Executive Director
Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers