

3/20/19

To: Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, and Members of the Committee,
Re: SB 1 and SB 221

My name is Andrew Grover and I am the Executive Director of Youth Villages Oregon. Our organization is committed to helping children, families, and young adults overcome life's most difficult challenges and ultimately live successfully. This year alone we will serve over 1,300 families in their homes and communities across the Portland Metro, Mid Valley, and Central Oregon regions of our state.

Many of the crises children and families in Oregon face are well documented. Our state has had twice the national average of children in foster care for over a decade. The number of families going to emergency rooms desperate for solutions to their child's mental health struggles has tripled in recent years, and even more recently children are being removed from their homes and communities only to be placed in hotels or out of state.

The underlying issues to these problems are not as well known. The current system serving children and youth with specialized needs does not support intervention and treatment at adequate levels or with cultural responsiveness, nor does it adequately serve this group when they are in crisis and after they have stabilized. There is a lack of cross-system collaboration, flexibility and responsiveness. Oregon doesn't have the capacity or a sustainable funding structure to support the needs of this population, including keeping them in a family setting and in school. The system lacks clarity in roles, responsibilities and accountability.

Taken together SB1 and SB 221 represent major progress in solving these avoidable crises. They **invest** in critically needed services to **help families stay together safely and successfully** whenever possible, **creating** high quality placements for youth who need a brief out of home placement, and **supporting** the expansion of crisis support programs. In addition to these investments, SB1 establishes a permanent leadership group appointed by the governor to provide oversight/accountability, incentivize change, and address gaps in the system.

Please support SB1 and SB221 to help these families and our communities get back on track for a hopeful future.

Thank you,



Andrew Grover
Executive Director
Youth Villages - Oregon