



Oregon District Attorneys Association, Inc.

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January 29, 2020

TO: Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
Rep. Ron Noble, Vice-Chair
Rep. Anna Williams, Vice-Chair

FR: Tim Colahan
Executive Director
Oregon District Attorneys Association (ODAA)

RE: Support for Increased Investment in Child Abuse Centers (HB 4112)

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of the ODAA for increased investment in our local child advocacy centers (CACs).

Oregon's District Attorneys have a long history of supporting their local CACs. DA's in each county work closely with their local Center through their Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) to ensure that children across the State have access to justice and the services they need to heal and be successful after facing abuse. Similarly, the legislature has a long history of supporting the work of the child abuse MDTs throughout the state by supporting the Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) fund, which provides critical resources for CACs.

Today, we recognize that the work of our MDTs and CACs must be proactive and collaborative. We must not only respond to concerns of abuse or neglect, but we must also ensure that children who have been victimized receive the support and therapy to recover. We know from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) studies¹ that children who are abused or neglected are more likely to suffer from mental health, addiction, and other challenges as adults. Through consistent support of Child Abuse MDTs, the CAMI funding, and now the effort to increase direct funding to the CACs, we can ensure Oregon's child abuse victims receive the support they deserve.

Due to our close relationship, ODAA knows first-hand that Centers are struggling to make ends meet due to a lack of funding. In fact, even though the CACs provide statutorily mandated services like Karly's law medical exams, conduct forensic interviews that are used by law enforcement and DA's, and play an integral role in their MDTs, State funding for the Centers only averages about 17%. This lack of funding directly results in a lack of access for kids who have faced abuse and depend on services provided by a Child Advocacy Center.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html>

Increasing state funding by \$3M will increase the State funding of Centers to approximately 28% and will result in an estimated 15% increase access to the effective, community-based, and coordinated child-centered response that occurs at a Center. Ensuring an appropriate, effective response is the least we can do for kids who have worked up the courage to finally disclose the abuse they have been facing.

When kids don't have access to their local Center, they are often instead seen by a busy emergency room physician, or even interviewed at a police station. This kind of evidence collection is not best-practice and impedes the ability to seek justice for the child. Additionally, we know that this kind of evidence collection only adds to the child's trauma—where accessing a child advocacy center may diminish it.

ODAA supports the Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers' effort for a \$3M funding increase, to be distributed by the DOJ directly to Centers in the 2020 Session.

Tim Colahan, Executive Director

Phone: (503) 934-1111 ▪ Fax: (503) 373-1936 ▪ odaa.oregon.gov ▪ 2250 McGilchrist St. SE, Ste. 100 Salem, OR 97302