



**Testimony in support of HB 4112
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Submitted by Kerry Naughton, Executive Director
February 3, 2020**

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Williams, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service (OAASIS). OAASIS is a statewide organization that empowers communities to prevent child sexual abuse and help survivors live full, healthy, joyful lives. Our base is comprised of thousands of Oregonians—people who were sexually abused as children, survivors’ family members and loved ones, and community members who care about the safety, health, and well-being of survivors of child sexual abuse. We are working towards a future where all people experience a loving childhood free of abuse and trauma, and all relationships are based on respect, consent, and equity.

We are pleased to support HB 4112, which will enable Oregon to better track and understand the prevalence of child abuse. With this increased knowledge, Oregon policymakers will be better able to shape structures to more effectively prevent, respond to, and help heal child abuse.

With the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS), Oregon will become the first state to develop an effective way to collect prevalence data to more accurately reflect the problem of child abuse and neglect. Currently, policy makers have to rely on reported incidents of abuse and neglect. But research indicates that reporting rates reflect a fraction of the overall problem. The experiences of survivors engaged with OAASIS reflects this: the majority of survivors never reported the sexual abuse to authorities. But survivors say they would have felt empowered to talk about their experiences honestly in a safe, trauma-informed survey.

In order for Oregon to more effectively address child abuse and neglect, we need better information. OCAPS is a scientifically-sound, successfully-piloted measurement strategy that will get Oregon the information we need.

We are also pleased to support HB 4112 because it will enable 1,220 more children each year to receive safe, trauma-informed medical assessments, forensic interviews, and opportunities for healing support.

OAASIS’s work has taught us that people can heal from the trauma of child sexual abuse. This knowledge that people can heal is based on a scientific understanding of trauma and resiliency and the lived experiences of countless survivors. Time and again, we have learned from survivors that the response to child sexual abuse can be as impactful as the abuse itself. When the survivor is believed,

heard, respected, given accurate information and trauma-informed support, and empowered to choose their own path toward health and healing, the survivor is better able to move from Post-Traumatic Stress to what neurobiologists call Post-Traumatic Growth.

Survivors of child sexual abuse can live full, healthy, joyful lives. For child survivors whose sexual abuse is reported, Oregon's Child Advocacy Centers provide an important step towards safety, health, and healing.

We hope you'll join us in supporting HB 4112. Thank you for your time and consideration.