



House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Testimony in Support of HB 4112: Funding for Children's Advocacy Centers, a Child Abuse Prevention Study and Erin's Law Training by the Oregon Department of Education

Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Williams, and members of the Committee.

My name is Trish Garner and I am the State Public Policy Chair of the American Association of University Women of Oregon. AAUW has been empowering women since 1881 by advancing equity through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.

The passage of Erin's Law in 2015 represented a significant milestone in bringing child abuse prevention programming to Oregon schools. Unfortunately, for all our good intentions, if we do not back programs with sufficient funding, all these positive intentions will not reach the populations they are designed to serve. Enactment of the law in 2015 was a good beginning, and now we need to get to work.

In order for children to feel safe enough to report abuse, both school personnel and students need to receive age-appropriate training on how to recognize abuse and provide a safe pathway for children to report it. A .5 FTE allocated to the Oregon Department of Education for a school sexual health specialist and a .5 FTE operations and policy analyst who focuses on school health education represent affirmative steps forward, but these position levels are also clearly inadequate to address the breadth of the need. As a number of the Healthy Teens Surveys and the research that underlies the Student Success Act of 2019 have demonstrated, child abuse is a significant problem that is likely here to stay unless adequately addressed. An additional 1.0 FTE will enable ODE to train more teachers on how to recognize and prevent child abuse.

One of the most critical needs for children who have been subjected to or have witnessed abuse is to provide as immediate short- and long-term treatment as possible. Children's Advocacy Centers will offer important forensic and medical examinations and follow-up treatment.

Research has shown that regardless of the etiology of the abuse or the socioeconomic status of abused children, the adverse impacts of maltreatment endure throughout life.¹ Maltreated children face a "negative developmental cascade" of maladaptation and psychopathology. This includes, for example, increased risk for developing insecure

¹ Society for Research in Child Development, *Developmental Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect: Implications for Intervention*, <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cdep.12317>.

attachments which in turn result in insecure self and ego development, as well as acting out in the external environment.

This negative process is exacerbated when abused children are not provided professional and expert treatment from medical, law enforcement and counseling sources as soon as possible. Trauma-informed interventions are critical and if the protocols underlying these interventions are not followed -- or the intervenor doesn't even know what a trauma-informed intervention is -- outcomes are far less effective.

AAUW of OR urges you to enact HB 4112 in order to increase Oregon Department of Education funding for Children's Advocacy Centers, a child abuse prevention study and Erin's Law training.

Respectfully submitted,

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