

William Marshall, Presiding Judge

(541) 957-2436

(541) 957-2445 (fax)

George W. Ambrosini, Judge

(541) 957-2422

(541) 957-2461 (fax)

Kathleen E. Johnson, Judge

(541) 957-2433

(541) 957-2445 (fax)

Frances E. Burge, Judge

(541) 957-2420

(541) 957-2461 (fax)



Ann Marie Simmons, Judge

(541) 957-2430

(541) 957-2445 (fax)

Jason R. Thomas

Hearings Referee

(541) 957-2408

(541) 957-2445 (fax)

Thomas Maxwell

Trial Court Administrator

(541) 957-2409

(541) 957-2461 (fax)

## CIRCUIT COURT FOR DOUGLAS COUNTY

### Sixteenth Judicial District

March 19, 2021

House Committee on Human Services

House of Representatives

State of Oregon

Salem, Oregon 97470

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chair Leif, Vice -Chair Ruiz, Representative Noble, Representative Owens, Representative Sanchez, and Representative Schouten,

As the Presiding Judge of Judicial District 16, Douglas County, I write to convey our Judicial District's strong support of House Bill 3366. A Family Treatment Court in our county could serve over 50 families in Douglas County providing wrap-around care for parents to help in their recovery and their children at risk due to substance abuse and addiction at home. These services through dependency court would be supported with intensive judicial involvement and oversight of their cases by our experienced juvenile judges and staff. We are prepared to make that investment of time, energy, and expertise with your support.

#### ***Needs in Our Judicial District***

In Douglas County the number of addiction-affected justice system participants has continued to rise for an extended period-of-time and will continue despite the de-criminalization of controlled substance possession. There is an acute need for unique and appropriately tailored responses to those parents who, due to addiction, risk having their children removed from their care and the potential of their parental rights being terminated. In Douglas County, we have over 560 juvenile dependency cases pending. Approximately one-half of the families who are in the dependency system are touched by some form of addiction or some form of abuse or neglect that has its roots in substance abuse.

As I think of substance abuse and the impact that it has on children, I consider seven children of a mother suffering from substance abuse. Each of those children has been removed and not returned despite our current best efforts to have the mother successfully deal with her substance abuse. Not all cases are this extreme, but more coordinated, wrap around services would help to eliminate long-lasting impact on families and children.

#### ***Different Response for Families Struggling with Substance Abuse Disorder***

The Family Treatment Court model provides a meaningful alternative to traditional case management and substance abuse treatment in child welfare cases. Family Treatment Courts for parents who require treatment for substance abuse and who are involved with the dependency system because of alleged child abuse or neglect will help families recover. This specialty court program combines intensive judicial monitoring with multidisciplinary interventions by profession treatment staff. By offering treatment, accountability, and supportive opportunities for safe reunification, these programs decrease the length of time children are removed to foster care and reduce trauma to both parent and child.

Collaboration and accountability are the hallmarks of Family Treatment Courts. Parents in Family Treatment Court engage in weekly case management meetings, supervised by the judge, with all stake holders present providing holistically treatment through the challenges the families are facing. Parents have their services tailored to their individual

needs and family circumstances. Family Treatment Courts build on the best qualities of each piece of the system through a model founded upon communication, community effort, and creative problem-solving.

Another important component of Family Treatment Courts is the weekly check-ins for the family with the judge overseeing the case., eliminating the wait for a family to voice concerns about the barriers they face, and providing them with continuous support and feedback. For a child in foster care, or a parent whose child is in foster care, every day counts before they can be reunited.

***Help Eliminate Removal of Children and Hasten Safe Return to Healthy Parents***

Family Treatment Courts deliver measurable, positive results. Children are less likely to be placed in foster care or stay in foster care for long periods. Parents are more likely to experience success in treatment, and the assurance of recovery for the family is greatly improved.

We have spoken with the treatment providers and child welfare advocates in our county and are united in our support of this bill. I am confident that an investment in our county will yield positive results for families and yields results in the strength and well-being of our community.

I urge you to support House Bill 3366. I thank you for your consideration and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



William Marshall  
Presiding Judge of Sixteenth Judicial District,  
Douglas County