



## **Testimony on HB5529 / Support Critical Child Welfare Programs**

Members of the Human Services Subcommittee:

Over the past several years, the Alliance4Kids has worked with key health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, and housing officials on youth and children's initiatives, including:

***Adverse Childhood Experiences      Trauma Informed Practices      SBHC Expansion***  
***Mental/Behavioral Challenges Among Youth***

One key lesson we've learned is:

***"We can either spend a little more on kids now,  
or a lot, lot, lot more later when they are adults."***

Unfortunately, Oregon has often chosen the latter path over the past decade. That's a fiscal mistake, for sure, but also a tragic error that leaves at-risk youth without the supports they need to become healthy, successful, and safe adults.

We should have learned this mistake from the last downturn (2008-2012):

**Oregon did not invest in kids. Those kids are now adults, and thousands and thousands of them are now homeless adults and living on the streets.**

This time, we need to make sure that we take every possible step to do this right and protect youth from the serious trauma and anxiety many are now dealing with as a result of the pandemic.

Doing so isn't difficult, which is why we strongly support:

- ✓ **POP 110:** Fully fund the DHS recommended Oregon Wage Index adjustments for the Child Welfare providers. This is actually required in order for Oregon to be in compliance with federal Medicaid law, and we are disappointed it was not in the Governor's budget. Including POP 110 will help non-profits reduce the staggering 40-65% turnover, reducing costs. It also leverages a 1/1 federal match: (\$3,102,604 GF leverages \$3,049,627 FF = \$6,152,231 TOTAL).
- ✓ **HB2424:** Later this week, this bill, which is the response to a DHS/OTIS (Office of Training Investigations and Safety ) work group, is expected to pass the House Committee on Human Services, and head your way. It provides **resources to train child welfare provider staff on new state and federal regulations, ensure a more diverse workforce, and leverage the existing OHA student loan repayment system to bring more QMHA's into the sector.** Better training will save money in child welfare. More staff and longer tenured staff will reduce costs and improve outcomes. That's a fact!
- ✓ **HB2544:** Oregon is near dead-last in the country on investing in **homeless youth intervention efforts.** Homeless youth without supports go on to become homeless adults. Thus, it is no surprise that we have such a high number of adults who are homeless. If we want to reduce adult homelessness, then we must cut off the supply and get youth off the streets and into safe, caring, and successful programs. #s we've generated show that a 5 year investment could save \$3.2 billion in lifetime costs for our systems.

If you have any questions, please contact us directly: **Doug Riggs/Jessica Chambers,**

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