



TO: The Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
FR: Derenda Schubert, PhD, Executive Director, Bridge Meadows
DA: March 30, 2021
RE: Support for DHS Foster Care System Programs & Supports in SB 5529

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Nosse and members of the committee,

My name is Derenda Schubert, and I am the Executive Director of Bridge Meadows. I am also a licensed psychologist with 30 years of experience working with children and their families who have been involved with the foster care system.

Bridge Meadows builds communities with a very special purpose to support youth who have experienced foster care, their forever families and elders who serve as mentors and surrogate grandparents with the children. We have two communities – one in Portland and one in Beaverton with our third community under construction and ready to open in Redmond, OR October 2021. We are a member of the Foster Homes of Healing coalition, and we are writing to express our **support for critical programming and investments in Oregon's foster care system.**

The primary purpose of Foster Homes of Healing is to elevate the quality of Foster Care in Oregon. In 2019 the Oregon State Legislature made strategic investments to improve the foster care system and better support children and youth in foster care. Our Coalition urges the legislature to **continue** this support. **In particular, we encourage the committee to maintain funding for the KEEP program and Treatment Foster Care Oregon. We also ask that the Committee consider making a much-needed investment to add additional child welfare caseworkers to support youth and families. Bridge Meadows families have benefitted from the KEEP program, especially in this global pandemic. Our families have had the online and telephone support of the KEEP program to provide much needed support navigating parenting issues and education challenges in this season. One of our parents shared that she tells everyone about the power of the KEEP program.**

In the past several years Oregon has made great strides toward improving our foster care system for youth and families. We hope that this committee will choose to maintain the evidence-based investments made in 2019 and consider additional support for the Oregon Department of Human Services by funding additional caseworkers. When the infrastructure to support our families and children is strong, we are all stronger together as a state.

Sincerely,

Derenda Schubert, PhD
Executive Director