



Testimony to the Joint Ways & Means Committee on Human Services in regards to HB 5529 & POP 110
March 30, 2021

Co-Chairs Lieber and Nosse, distinguished members of the committee. I am writing today in support of HB 5529 and, particularly, the Oregon Department of Human Services POP 110 request.

I believe I have met most of you before and we have often corresponded on the needs of Oregon's children - particularly children who end up in the care and custody of the Oregon Department of Human Services. For those I have not met, I am the Executive Director of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services and the Acting Executive Director of True Housing - two organizations with over 50 years each providing services to children and families with significant needs and facing many, many barriers to opportunity and success.

While we are based in Clackamas County, we have statewide contracts and serve children, youth and families from all parts of our beautiful state.

To get to the point, I urge you to support Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Policy Option Package (POP) 110. This would provide an upward adjustment in the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) rate to address the 40 to 60% annual staff turnover rate that afflicts our sector. POP 110 would also provide over \$3M in federal matching funds.

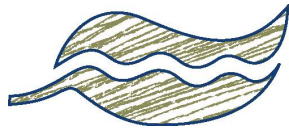
BRS programs are community-based and support youth with severe psychosocial and emotional issues through behavioral intervention, counseling, and skills-training. These programs support children and youth to address their significant trauma and to build their own resiliency. BRS programs are also required to work with the family, helping to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for children to return to and thrive in.

POP 110 would begin to address high staff turnover (at True Housing we had 100% turnover in our front line staff in the last year!) by adjusting the Oregon Wage Information (OWI) to 2021 data. It would also adjust the rate ongoing to assure that the most current salary data for direct care and other staff are used in the agencies' legislatively approved budgets. As some of you may know, the Metro area minimum wage is about to rise to \$15 per hour. While I fully support this move to a living wage for our employees, I am embarrassed to admit that our frontline workers currently earn less than this.

In fact, the entry-level staff who provide the bulk of the care to the children we look after earn less than they would working in fast food and other service jobs. This is totally unacceptable and the legislature is the only entity in the state with the power to change this ridiculous situation.

I don't need to tell you that high staff turnover leads to increased costs and has negative impacts on quality of care. Constant staff changes can also re-traumatize children who have sadly see too many adults cycle through their lives.

POP 110 is not an investment in ODHS's bureaucracy, it is a DIRECT investment in Oregon's children - an investment matched by Federal dollars which doubles the state allocation and impact!



Parrott Creek

Serving Children and Families

As ever, thank you for your dedication to the people of Oregon and, in particular, our most vulnerable children who need our love, care and support the most. I appreciate your continued commitment in ensuring that ALL of Oregon's children have the opportunity to grow up in strong, stable and loving families.

Simon Fulford
Executive Director