



TO: The Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
FR: Kendra Morris-Jacobson, Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC)
DA: March 30, 2021
RE: Support for DHS Foster Care System Programs & Supports in SB 5529

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

My name is Kendra Morris-Jacobson and I am the Director of Oregon Programs for Northwest Resource Associates where I supervise Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC), the state's foster & adoptive parent library, the OARE recruitment website, and other programs.

We provide education, training and supports for foster, adoptive, guardianship, and kinship parents statewide. We see it every day; foster care leaves a lifelong imprint on kids! Continuing to lift up Oregon's foster care system and prioritizing child welfare investments are crucial for re-shaping the trauma and trajectory of our state's children, regardless of whether they reunify, age out or find other permanency. That is why we belong to the Foster Homes of Healing Coalition.

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, a need that is greater than ever.**

In our experience, KEEP is a lifeline for the families that we intersect with and refer. With KEEP, families get solid evidence-based treatment that is hands-on and bolstered by a lasting peer network. In addition, KEEP is a wonderful community partner to coordinate with. They make the referral process smooth and work hard to stay connected with other supplementary supports like ours that add additional buffering for families and children.

In the past several years Oregon has made great strides toward improving our foster care system for youth and families. Let's keep it up! 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kendra Morris-Jacobson".

Kendra Morris-Jacobson, MA
Director of Oregon Programs
Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center, Northwest Resource Associates
Member, Foster Homes of Healing Coalition