



**Testimony in support of HB 2826
House Committee on Human Services
Submitted by Kerry Naughton, Co-Director
February 9, 2021**

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kerry Naughton and I am the Co-Director of Oregon Abuse Advocates & Survivors in Service (OASIS). OASIS is a statewide organization that empowers communities to prevent child sexual abuse and help survivors live full, healthy, joyful lives. Our base is comprised of thousands of Oregonians—people who were sexually abused as children, survivors’ family members and loved ones, and community members who care about the safety, health, and well-being of survivors of child sexual abuse. We are working towards a future where all people experience a loving childhood free of abuse and trauma, and all relationships are based on respect, consent, and equity.

We are pleased to support HB 2826, which will enable more children each year to receive safe, trauma-informed medical assessments, forensic interviews, and opportunities for healing support.

OASIS’s work has taught us that people can heal from the trauma of child sexual abuse. This knowledge that people can heal is based on a scientific understanding of trauma and resiliency and the lived experiences of countless survivors. Time and again, we have learned from survivors that the response to child sexual abuse can be as impactful as the abuse itself. When the survivor is believed, heard, respected, given accurate information and trauma-informed support, and empowered to choose their own path toward health and healing, the survivor is better able to move from Post-Traumatic Stress to what neurobiologists call Post-Traumatic Growth.

Survivors of child sexual abuse can live full, healthy, joyful lives. For child survivors whose sexual abuse is reported, Oregon’s Children’s Advocacy Centers provide an important step towards safety, health, and healing.

There are over 20 Centers across the state, serving all 36 counties by providing services like medical exams and forensic interviews—as well as prevention services and follow up family services and mental health treatment for children who have concerns of abuse. Centers work in close collaboration with law enforcement, DHS, district attorneys, schools, and other community partners during child abuse investigations, both to be cost-effective and because this model has shown improved outcomes for children.

Advocates working in the field of child abuse agree that the risk for abuse is much higher during periods of economic instability, stress, and isolation. Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers must be prepared to address, assess, and treat children who have been victimized during this pandemic. Investing \$6 million in Children's Advocacy Centers is urgent and necessary to accomplish these critical community needs.

We hope you'll join us in supporting HB 2826 and an additional \$6 million investment into Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers. Thank you for your time and consideration.