



May 7, 2021

To: Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee

From: Steve Callaway, Mayor, City of Hillsboro

RE: Support for Washington County Family Peace Center project (SB 5534)

Prior to serving as Mayor I was a principal for many years in Hillsboro. In that role I witnessed firsthand the impact on children and families from violence in the home, physical and emotional harm, and sexual abuse. While I am no longer a principal my commitment to protecting children and families has never wavered.

That's why I am writing to express strong support for the Washington County Family Peace Center project. This project seeks to establish a 20,000+ square foot facility for Washington County children and families impacted by child abuse, neglect and domestic violence. This facility would provide medical treatment, therapy, family support and prevention services to address trauma in a collaborative, proactive way while promoting the health and safety of our community. Critically important is that it would be local to Washington County residents. I witnessed children unable to access services and counseling due to the distance and time involved. I recall two educators from one of my schools who drove two female sisters, once a week after school for an entire school year, to services in Portland because due to the distance and time required their mother couldn't take this much time away from work.

Co-locating services for both child abuse and domestic violence makes sense because many times these two situations occur simultaneously and when a parent makes the decision to report or seek help availing services in one location at one time empowers the victim by removing bureaucratic steps and delays. Make no mistake, there is an urgent need in Washington County. We know that child abuse and domestic violence are widespread and cause long-lasting social and economic harm, not only to the victims individually but also to the community as a whole. Additionally, while this trauma impacts everyone it can often have a disproportionate impact on those who are financially vulnerable or historically marginalized. COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges as incidents of abuse have increased, while access to help and resources has decreased.

A Washington County Family Peace Center follows a national model and will be the first co-located center of this type for child abuse and domestic violence in Oregon.

I urge your support for the Washington County Family Peace Center project. This investment in the most vulnerable members of our community will not only promote the health and safety of children and families today, but the well-being of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steve Callaway'.

Steve Callaway
Mayor, City of Hillsboro