



Gretchen Havner
ATTORNEY AT LAW

May 11, 2021

Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee
900 State Street NE, Room H-178
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 5030

Co-chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and members of the Committee.

My name is Gretchen Havner, and I am an attorney practicing dependency law with the Parent Child Representation Program (PCRP) in Lincoln County, Oregon. The goal of PCRP is to provide high quality legal representation with multidisciplinary support to families involved in the child welfare system. PCRP provides families with lawyers who specialize in dependency law and maintain a reasonable caseload, so they have more time to spend directly with each client and provide more substantial out of court advocacy. As a PCRP attorney I can focus on each case beyond the courtroom and into direct advocacy for my client when dealing with ODHS for increased visitation, access to more case specific services, and supporting parental engagement in the reunification process. Many parents feel overwhelmed and hopeless by the ODHS child welfare process. ODHS child welfare is full of acronyms and specific terminology that is confusing and ominous. Having an attorney available to explain the process and attend meetings to advocate for a parent or child helps them feel confident to engage in the process, remain hopeful, and continue momentum in a case, which leads to kids returning to stable homes more quickly.

PCRP also provides multidisciplinary support by giving attorneys and their clients access to independent case managers who work directly with families. Case managers aid in securing safe and stable housing, additional support during meetings and communications with ODHS, and creative problem solving. While ODHS has a set group of providers, case managers go out and find the service to fit a family's specific needs. Many families involved in child welfare are victims of trauma and/or generational poverty. Many families often do not have the natural support networks we all rely on in times of crisis. Case managers bridge this gap by providing the specific support for each family. While ODHS referred one of my parent clients named "B" to a specific service for drug and alcohol treatment, B did not know how to engage in this service and felt nervous and anxious about even walking in the door. Our case manager met B at the



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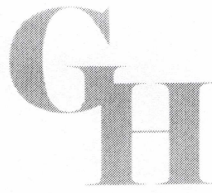
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door of the treatment center, helped B fill out the necessary paperwork, provided B encouragement to support her continued engagement in treatment and advocated for B when a disagreement occurred with the treatment center. This level of support is essential in supporting lasting change for parents.

Case managers also work with kids. I represent a seventh grader “J” who has a history of severe behavior problems in the classroom and performing far behind his grade level. When Covid-19 began, J had no internet access in his home. When school went online our case manager advocated for a mobile hot spot allowing J access to learning. After a few months of zoom school, it was clear that J was not progressing with online instruction and was struggling to engage in class and retain information. Our case manager contacted the school and advocated for placement in a special program designed for kids with trouble engaging in school. Our case manager gathered the information necessary to show J qualified for the program and supported J’s placement in completing the documents necessary and returning them to school. Thanks to this intervention and extra support, J went from a child failing at zoom school to a child thriving at grade level in an in-person program. J transformed from a child requiring a safety plan for room clears, to a young man described as a leader in his class, mentoring newer students in the program. J’s case manager is one of the primary forces in changing the trajectory of J’s life.

PCRCP affords attorneys the ability to specialize dependency law and provides access to frequent trainings targeted specifically to this complicated and unique area of legal practice. The most crucial aspect of this technical support for attorneys is access to the PCRCP Juvenile Resource Counsel, Shannon Flowers. Ms. Flowers is available to consult with attorneys to provide support in strategic planning, technical guidance and appellate issue preservation. In a recent termination of parental rights case, a crucial issue came to the forefront during the termination trial. This issue is a substantial question of law that will impact many parents statewide. During the time limitations of trial, Ms. Flowers provided me support in working through the legal issues, strategic planning on how to best preserve and present the issue to the trial court and assistance in preserving the issue in writing for a potential appeal. This support greatly enhanced my ability to provide zealous, effective representation to my client and will likely ripple out to help many parents statewide. Legal issues often come up quickly in dependency law and having access to support from someone as experienced, talented and passionate as Ms. Flowers is essential.

Thank you for funding PCRCP in Lincoln County. The high level of support for families PCRCP provides reduces the time in care for children, leads to more long-term solutions, and ultimately leads to safer kids with more stable home lives. PCRCP provides a cost savings for Oregon by reducing children’s time in care thereby reducing the high cost of providing for children in foster care. Your investment has led to a reduced number of children in foster care



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in Lincoln County. I hope that you will continue to value the role of PCRP in reuniting families and continue your investment in protecting our most vulnerable kids by supporting the expansion of PCRP statewide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gretchen Havner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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