



# Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: February 9, 2021

TO: Representative Williams, Chair; Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz; and members of the House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Julie Scholz, Executive Director of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: Support HB 2826 – Child Abuse Intervention Funding

The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS) is the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are committed to improving the health and well-being of all children in Oregon, and supporting the adults who care for them. OPS strongly supports HB 2826, which would provide crucial funding to Oregon's network of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs).

Why pediatrician members of OPS endorse this bill:

- 1) Child Advocacy Centers help children and families cope with some of the most horrific life situations imaginable for a young person. CACs provide wrap-around services to young victims of abuse and crime. Their multi-disciplinary teams are trained in developmentally appropriate forensic interviewing and examination, and able to provide follow up treatment, facilitate ongoing therapy, and long-term care. CACs coordinate and build relationships with local law enforcement, child welfare caseworkers, the justice system, mental health providers and medical clinics to best serve the needs of children and their community.
- 2) Hospital Emergency Departments are not an appropriate venue for the vast majority of child abuse victims. Child abuse medical assessment is a specialty requiring extensive training. Most mandated reporters and primary care providers do not have the training or resources to comprehensively evaluate their patients when there is concern for abuse. Pediatric providers understand the importance of children having access to specialists in child abuse, neglect and trauma. Physicians are mandated reporters and rely on their ability to consult with or refer children and families to CACs and trained abuse specialists.
- 3) The State is failing children by not adequately funding Oregon's network of child advocacy centers. Physicians make referrals in good faith that their patients will be seen quickly by experts, but 45% of Oregon children referred to a local CAC are not seen,



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often due to the network's lack of capacity. Because kids can't access a CAC, too often Oregon Department of Human Services caseworkers are making decisions regarding abuse allegations without full medical information. This information gap means that a child may be inappropriately removed from a safe family environment or left in a dangerous environment. The children of Oregon deserve to have appropriate medical expertise so that families and caseworkers can untangle these difficult situations.

- 4) CAC teams provide timely and age-appropriate trauma-focused therapy to help children recover from an abusive situation. Studies have shown that childhood trauma, if not adequately addressed at the time of the trauma, can lead to a lifetime of emotional, behavioral, and physical health problems, and can even lead to a continuing cycle of abuse. Funding CACs is the best way to break this cycle.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed many additional stressors on families. Mitigating toxic stress to manageable levels is one way to promote resiliency and ensure children, and their caregivers, develop healthy coping strategies. Our communities, pediatricians, and family practitioners need a substantial increase in State investment in Child Advocacy Centers. CACs in Oregon have never had the level of funding they need to manage the demand for their services. The impact and costs of abuse to young people, families, and communities is exponential. The impact on our society is devastating.

The Oregon Pediatric Society urges you to vote yes on HB 2826, for all our children and our future.