

February 24, 2021

Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) Budget, HB5039

- Good Afternoon Chair Gorsek and Members of the Committee.
- For the record my name is Royce Bowlin and I am the Executive Director for the Oregon Alliance.
- We are a non-profit dedicated to championing and advocating for the health and well-being of children, youth and families and communities across Oregon in schools, at home, in residential settings and within the community.
- Combined our 40 member organizations serve annually over 100,000 children, adolescents, young adults and families with their over 5,000 staff.
- On behalf of our members, I'm here to voice our support the Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) budget request.
- We also ask you to support OYA's Policy Option Package 115, which adjusts the Behavioral Rehabilitation Providers daily rate. This adjustment begins to adequately and appropriately compensates providers for the services provided to Oregon's most vulnerable youth and young adults.

- BRS programs are community based and support youth with severe psychosocial, emotional, and behavioral issues through behavioral intervention, counseling, and skills-training. Services are delivered in a way that integrates a gender-responsive, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate approach.
- By approving this adjustment, Oregon would continue to honor a settlement agreement reached in 2014 to make a good faith effort to pay an adequate rate by using current data.
- In late June 2019, the BRS rate review subcommittee was reconvened. Membership in the group included representation from state agencies, BRS providers, and stakeholders; they met 8 times in total.
- Out of this work, came the recommendation to update the BRS rates based on updated Oregon Wage Information. In response, OYA submitted a request to the Governor's office, however it did not make it into the Governor's proposed 21/23 budget.
- The request was for \$2,351,305 of general fund, this would leverage \$1,689,771 of federal match. This only brings us to 2017 wages.
- We are asking you to approve the funding adjustment using 2019 OWI. By doing this, it would provide community-based providers the tools to

address their annual 40 to 60% turnover rate. By reducing staff turnover, you will see improved treatment outcomes for children and youth, reduced costs, and increased safety for everyone. The Alliance surveyed our members and found the average cost of turnover for just one staff is \$6,100. If an organization has to replace 10 staff in a year, the cost is \$61,000.

- We also ask you to provide funding for Sexual Offender Treatment for the unfunded additional expense to certify and license providers in BRS programs.
- Currently, providers are providing this service without payment because it is part of their organizational mission. As of January 2021, there were 358 youth with a sex offense under OYA custody. By funding this service in the BRS setting, rather than in an outpatient setting, will save the state in excess of \$1,000,0000 per biennium.
- In closing, we applaud OYA's current efforts to improve outcomes for marginalized youth by addressing systemic racism and hiring a more diverse staff. We also support the investment in community-based supports for youth and young adults to support their transition into the community.

- Thank you for your time today and for your ongoing dedication to help some of Oregon's most vulnerable youth.

Royce Bowlin