

2/24/21

Dear Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety:

As a board member of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services, we are dedicated to providing services to improve the lives of children, youth and families from across the state. Please see www.pcreek.org.

I am writing to you in support of HB 5039 but to ask for appropriate investment in services that are critically needed.

There is one area where Oregon continues to fail its population of vulnerable youth – and by extension their families *and* their communities – and that is in our collective investment in adequate and appropriate community services and supports. We should all be ashamed that Oregon ranks 36th for teen suicide rates, 39th for K-12 education achievement AND 47th for child & youth access to mental health treatment and support.

The youth that end up in the Oregon Youth Authority's jurisdiction are the direct result of these failures in service investment.

While the number of youth being referred to OYA has thankfully been declining, the acuity of their needs has been increasing. Significant mental and behavioral health needs, inappropriate sexual behaviors and offenses, drug and alcohol addictions and highly challenging, sometimes aggressive, behaviors.

Youth of color and low-income communities across the state are disproportionately impacted by this.

Oregon has failed to adequately invest in the creation of a strong, robust, skilled and financially stable array of community-based programs – residential treatment, independent living, skills-training, mentoring and culturally responsive services – to best serve youth who enter the juvenile justice system.

I urge you to support Oregon Youth Authority's Policy Option Package 115. POP 115 would provide an upward adjustment in the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) rate to address the crippling 40 to 60% annual staff turnover community providers are challenged by. **POP 115 would also provide \$1.7M in federal match.**

I also ask you to provide adequate funding for Sex Offender Treatment in BRS programs. Currently, organizations like Parrott Creek are providing this service without payment because it is part of our organizational mission. We are subsidizing the cost of a treatment service that you have legislatively mandated. This is unethical. Funding this service in the BRS setting, rather than in an outpatient setting, **will save the state in excess of \$1,000,000 per biennium.**

Investing adequately in our youth means they can heal their trauma and go on to fulfilling and meaningful lives: as husbands and wives, as parents of happy and healthy children of their own, as

successful employees or business owners themselves - and taxpayers who can invest in the next generation so that we don't repeat our mistakes of the past.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elissa Looney

Elissa Looney
Parrott Creek Board Member
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