

February 24, 2021

RE: Support for **HB 5039 & Oregon Youth Authority's Policy Option Package 115**

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

As Board Chair of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services, I work every day to ensure that we can continue to provide services that improve the lives of children, youth and families from across the state. (Please see [www.pccreek.org](http://www.pccreek.org).)

Regrettably, Oregon has repeatedly failed to adequately invest in our youth. Specifically, Oregon has not supported the creation of a strong, robust, skilled and financially stable array of community-based programs.

So, I am writing to you today to urgently request your support of:

- 1) **HB 5039** for appropriate investment in services for Oregon's youth that are critically needed.
- 2) **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.**
- 3) **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.**

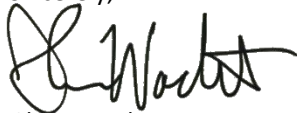
The reasons for my critical request of your support include:

- If there 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.
- As a result, it is no surprise--and we should all be ashamed--that **Oregon ranks 36th for teen suicide rates, 39th for K-12 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 offences, drug and alcohol addictions and highly challenging, sometimes aggressive, behaviors.
- Youth of color and youth from low-income communities across the state are disproportionately impacted.

Oregon has failed to adequately invest in the infrastructure and services our youth need– residential treatment, independent living, skills-training, mentoring and culturally responsive services – to best serve youth who enter the juvenile justice system.

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 ss taxpayers who can invest in the next generation so that we don't repeat our mistakes of the past.

Sincerely,



Glenn Wachter

Board Chair, Parrott Creek Child & Family Services