

February 25, 2021

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

As Chief Financial Officer of Bob Belloni Ranch, Inc. dedicated to providing services to improve the lives of youth and young adults in Coos, Curry and Douglas counties and across the state, I urge you to support Oregon Youth Authority's Policy Option Package (POP) 115 and to provide funding for Sex Offender Treatment (SOT). POP 115 would provide an upward adjustment in the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) rate to address the 40 to 60% annual staff turnover rate. It would also provide \$1.7M in federal match.

The youth in Belloni's residential programs typically have a history of family conflict, problems with chronic delinquency, substance abuse, and poor school performance. We accept youth from all parts of the state, with priority given to residents on the Southern Oregon Coast. The program includes individual, family, and group counseling as well as individual and group skills training. Additionally, our sex offence treatment program is one of very few residential treatment resources in Oregon that treats high-risk adolescent sex offenders (13-18 years of age) as well as their families.

Our Independent Living Program provides community-based independent living skill development for current and former permanent foster youth in Coos and Curry Counties. Permanent foster youth remain with their foster families, and continue with public school. Services provided are individualized, culturally, and gender-appropriate and provided in accordance with development readiness and stages of independence. Independent Living provides a life-skills assessment to determine the life skill training needs and transition readiness of each youth referred, and builds a written comprehensive transition master plan with quarterly updates to determine goals, steps, and services needed for transition from the foster care system to independence. Emphasis during service delivery focuses on the youth's accomplishments, needs, and progression towards determined independence goals.

BRS programs are community-based and support youth with severe psychosocial, emotional, and behavioral issues through behavioral intervention, counseling, and skills-training. Also, youth and youth adults of color are disproportionately more likely to be adjudicated to the Oregon Youth Authority and to receive services from a BRS provider.

POP 115 would begin to address high staff turnover by adjusting the Oregon Wage Information to 2017 wages. Based on a survey conducted by the Oregon Alliance, the average cost of a single staff turnover is \$6,100. If an organization has to replace 10 staff, the total cost to the organization is \$61,000 annually. We are asking you to approve the funding adjustment using 2019 OWI numbers. High turnover leads to increased costs and has negative impacts on care quality. This produces significant costs to organizations, but the real cost is to vulnerable children and families, preventing the long-term sustainability of evidence-based practices to help them improve their lives. This is an investment in youth and the staff that support them every day.

We also ask you to provide funding for SOT for the unfunded additional expense to certify and license providers in BRS programs. Currently, we are providing this service without payment because it is part of our organizational mission. As of January 2021, there were 358 youth with a sex offense under OYA custody. 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.

Thank you for your continued commitment in ensuring youth and young adults have access to high-quality supports and services so they too will have an opportunity to thrive and live their best lives.

Sincerely,

Thujee Lhendup
Chief Financial Officer