



March 1, 2021

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

As CEO of Trillium Family Services, dedicated to building brighter futures with children, families and communities in Oregon, we urge you to support House Bill 2424 - The Child Safety and Workforce Improvement Act. Our organization provides mental health care to children and families across all 36 counties in Oregon in residential and outpatient settings.

In a 2019 *Mental Health of America* report, Oregon ranks the last out of 51 states and territories in terms of access to behavioral health care for youth. Tragically, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 10-24 and has been on the rise since 2011. Youth of color are 25.2% more likely to use alcohol in comparison to white youth. To improve safety and support more positive outcomes for children and youth, we must invest and diversify our community-based workforce.

Our staff show up every day for youth and children, throughout this pandemic. They are genuinely motivated with a genuine desire to help youth. But they have high caseloads, are working in a complicated regulatory environment, and are working with youth and children with significant and complex needs. All the while, they receive poor compensation for this critical work, in terms of benefits, wages and advancement opportunities. Turnover in our sector is understandably very high.

This bill makes crucial investments in our workforce. Specifically, the Child Safety and Workforce Improvement Act will invest:

- \$1.25M per biennium in training funds to improve child/youth safety, treatment outcomes, regulatory compliance, and improve the retention and recruitment of a well-trained, highly qualified provider workforce.
- \$2.5M per biennium to support the recruitment and retention of staff of color.
- \$250K per biennium for student loan forgiveness focusing on QMHA's or social service designated staff.
- \$250K per biennium to begin an apprentice program for QMHAs/Ps, initial start-up costs for 25 apprentices.

I appreciate your continued commitment in ensuring children, youth and families have access to high-quality programs and services, so Oregon children receive the support and care to grow up in strong, stable and loving families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim Scott".

Kim Scott, CEO

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Corvallis, Oregon 97330
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F 541-750-1120

Edwards School Day Program
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Portland, Oregon 97214
T 503-963-4920
F 503-445-0602

Sender House Young Adult Program
729 SW 7th Avenue
Albany, Oregon 97322
T 541-928-1757
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Central Oregon Day Treatment – Sagebrush
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