

HB 2479 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

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Meeting Dates: 1/18, 1/23

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Provides that children's advocacy centers and employees or designated agents thereof are immune from civil liability and from participating in judicial proceedings when participating in child abuse assessments in good faith. Maintains liability for damages resulting from gross negligence and misconduct. Requires applications for grant funds for operating child advocacy centers to include evidence of accreditation by nationally recognized organization. Applies provisions to acts occurring before, during, or after effective date and grant applications submitted after effective date. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

REVENUE: Revenue impact issued

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Services provided by children's advocacy centers
- Risks of legal liability faced by service providers
- Comparable protections provided to other entities and in other states
- Insurance carried by providers

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention Program (CAMI), operated through the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ), exists to ensure the safety and health of child abuse victims by coordinating a community-based system for responding to allegations of child abuse. A core feature of this system is a network of children's advocacy centers, which are certified and partially funded by grants administered by the program. Children's advocacy centers perform medical assessments, forensic interviews, and other support services as part of investigations into allegations of child abuse. In 2019, the legislature passed House Bill 2464, which expanded the role of these centers to centralize the services provided in alignment with national accreditation standards.

House Bill 2479 provides that children's advocacy centers and their employees are granted immunity from civil liability and from participating in judicial proceedings that result from actions taken in good faith as part of child abuse assessments. The measure also requires that grant applications submitted by children's advocacy centers provide evidence of national accreditation.