

January 31, 2023

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallen, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Karsen O'Bryan and I am the Executive Director at ABC House, the Children's Advocacy Center serving Linn and Benton counties. I am a constituent writing to you from Albany, Oregon, and I urge you to support HB 2732.

At ABC House, we are first responders in addressing child abuse by bringing together a coordinated team of experts in medicine, victim advocacy, mental health, law enforcement and other disciplines to both hold offenders accountable and help children and families heal in a comprehensive, seamless way so no future is out of reach. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), as well as other victim service providers for programs serving survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, drunk driving, homicide, and other crimes, rely heavily on funds as allocated through HB 2732. As you know, the Christmas Tree bill was created as a one-time funding allocation, and CACs continually report that their greatest need is highly specialized staff. In fact, nearly every CAC reported using the 2021 funding for increased staff, or increased hours for existing staff. ABC House utilized funds to grow to hire another medical provider to meet the ever-increasing need of child in Linn and Benton counties. We continue to see increased need and demand for our services. The need for additional direct service professionals is dire.

CACs serve all children regardless of their family's ability to pay, but the current level of state support means many children endure long waitlists for services. Worse, children might not be seen by a CAC at all. Instead, they may be interviewed in police stations or emergency rooms by staff with no specialized training to assess children for child abuse, and without the team of multidisciplinary experts working together— which is a cornerstone of the CAC approach.

Passing HB 2732 will move us closer to an Oregon where all children have access to a team of experts who are dedicated to supporting them, stopping abuse and beginning the process of healing. Please hold the progress you made to protect kids and continue the \$6M investment in CACs.

As a constituent and as someone who cares deeply about victims and survivors, I urge you to support HB 2732.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and for your continued advocacy for child abuse survivors. They are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Karsen O'Bryan
Executive Director
ABC House

