

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY SUPPORT HB 2732

JANUARY 31, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, **we are pleased to submit testimony in support of HB 2732.**

At the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF), our mission is to facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in Oregon. Our goal is to prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place, while simultaneously improving our response efforts to mitigate trauma and ensure the safety and security of all victims.

Oregon SATF is firm in our stance that sexual violence, child abuse and all other forms of violence and abuse are connected. We urge support for HB 2732 and increasing funding for Child Advocacy Centers (CAC). CACs provide critical services to youth and families experiencing abuse, neglect, and violence. CACs ensure that young people have a safe place to disclose experiences of abuse, neglect, and violence, enabling staff to properly diagnose and offer treatment services to help support their healing and access to safety.

There are over 20 CACs across the state, serving all 36 counties by providing services like medical exams and forensic interviews—as well as prevention services and follow up family services and mental health treatment for youth who present with concerns of abuse. CACs work in close collaboration with law enforcement, DHS, district attorneys, schools and other community partners during child abuse assessments and investigations, both to be cost effective and because this model has shown improved outcomes for children.

When young people cannot access a CAC, the likelihood of misdiagnoses is higher, which can result in youth remaining in unsafe situations or being removed from their homes unnecessarily. Lack of access to CACs may also result in additional trauma as a result of youth receiving services in police stations and emergency rooms, rather than a child-friendly setting designed specifically for them. We know this impact is a greater concern for youth of color and those from communities with historically traumatic experiences with response systems.

We must ensure that child welfare, and the community agencies that support child wellbeing, have what is needed to help keep youth safe. Investing \$6 million in Child Advocacy Centers is urgent and necessary to accomplish these critical goals. Young people across Oregon should have access to trained medical forensic providers, trauma-informed interviewing process, and connections to other community resources. Oregon's CACs are key leaders in these efforts. More than that – young people deserve an investment in a future without violence and abuse, which is why we are proud to support this bill and also urge your support of HB 2732.

Sincerely,



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