

February 8, 2023

70 SW Century Drive, Ste 100, PMB 345  
Bend, OR 97702

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Sharf and Members of the  
Committee,

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions (OCAS) is the statewide network of Children's Advocacy Centers. These are the entities that provide medical exams, forensic interviews, and other support services when there is a question of child abuse. There are 24 Children's Advocacy Centers serving all 36 counties.

OCAS is in strong support of HB 2578, which would add continuing education requirements for mandatory reporters. Oregon has robust mandatory reporting laws, but still too often, child abuse goes unreported. In the last several years, the Oregon Legislature has added additional professions to the mandatory reporter statutes. OCAS has fully supported these additions. However, some of the professions added may not be regularly involved with kids or families, and/or may not have existing mechanisms in place to review their responsibilities regularly. This makes the continuing education described in HB 2578 even more critical.

Further, mandatory reporters often do not realize the extent of their obligations. For example, a common question that mandated reporters ask is if they still must report child abuse that they witness or learn of outside of their official duties. The answer to this question is yes.

The timely report of child abuse or suspected abuse is critical to save the lives of children who are being victimized. Anecdotally, a significant portion of child abuse mandatory reports come from school staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic when learning occurred online and some children had less access to safe adults, Children's Advocacy Centers reported that due to a lack of exposure to mandated reporters, children who were being abused were



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left in dangerous situations for longer. During this time period, Children’s Advocacy Centers reported that the severity of cases of abuse seen at CACs skyrocketed.

OCAS feels that training that includes information about the obligations for a mandatory reporter, as well as an explanation of how to file a report will result in more necessary reports of child abuse being made, and more lives saved. Oregon Child Abuse Solutions respectfully requests support of HB 2578.

Sincerely,

Shelly Smith  
Executive Director