

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health & Health Care

Date: March 13, 2023

RE: Support for HB 2539

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services, we urge you to support HB 2544 so that the state can adequately invest in increasing statewide capacity of residential facilities serving individuals with substance use disorders or mental health concerns.

By nearly every measures, Oregon is failing its most vulnerable populations and, in particular, its youth – something we should all be ashamed of! Research published by the Oregon Health Sciences University in 2022 found Oregon ranks 2nd in the nation for drug related deaths, first for needing but not receiving treatment and, worse still, first in the nation for the percent of the population 12 and older with illicit drug use disorders. Further analysis shows a 49% gap in the provision of behavioral health treatment services.

For too long the state has relied on community providers, the vast majority of whom are nonprofit organizations, to raise their own funds to build new service capacity. This has led to the *massive* under-investment in services as highlighted by the OHSU report and shows that we, as a state, have failed in our basic responsibilities. Over the last decade the state has LOST residential treatment capacity at a time that we all knew demand was growing.

NOW is the time for Oregon to change the trajectory of its crumbling social service system.

Parrott Creek is ready, willing and able to partner with you in building this new capacity. We have a 54-year heritage of providing residential care to Oregon's most vulnerable and marginalized children and youth. As some of you already know, we are also working with local and national thought-leaders to re-envision how we conceptualize the care, treatment and physical spaces provided to system-involved youth in residential settings. We are proud to placing ourselves at the heart of statewide efforts to meet the growth in demand for mental health and drug-treatment services and, in particular, creating programs that can reverse the disproportionate impact of behavioral health challenges on BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and other disadvantaged communities. We are building forty (40) brand new residential treatment beds, and state funds made possible through legislation such as HB 2544 could help ensure this capacity comes online as quickly as possible.

Again, we urge you to pass HB 2544 and help create a better future for some of Oregon's most vulnerable community members.

Sincerely,



Simon Fulford
Executive Director