



March 24, 2023

To: Join Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
From: Our Children Oregon
RE: Support of SB 5525

Dear Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth have what they need, regardless of their race or where they live, to thrive by activating meaningful change for children and families. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. **We support POP 442, which funds the Oregon Health Authority's child health policy team and sustains the continued dissemination of child health complexity data.**

Since 2018, Oregon has been leading the nation in Child Health Complexity Data, implementing an innovative program that collects, maintains, and disseminates data on the needs of medically complex children.¹ This annual report has been essential for establishing better coordination and systems of care for infants, children, and adolescents with health complexities. As a result, the report reveals that 1 in 4 publicly-insured children and youth in Oregon have complex medical needs. Astoundingly, 78% of children and youth with a special medical need have experienced at least one social challenge such as poverty, abuse or neglect, foster care, the death or incarceration of a parent, and mental health. 38% of whom have experienced 3 or more. Layered with race and ethnicity, language barriers, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability, the disadvantages these children experience will continue to grow and persist without interventions and support, negatively impacting them and their families throughout adulthood.

Having a program dedicated to understanding child health complexity is essential to identify children most in need, and thus, better serve and improve the lives of Oregon's children now. However, POP 442 is currently not in SB 5525. Meeting children's unique care needs requires specialized knowledge, actionable data, and collaboration across agencies. This groundbreaking data and work are at risk of not being maintained or enhanced due to the lack of funding. **We ask that the legislature designate \$1.5 million in the Oregon Health Authority budget (SB 5525) for the agency's child health team as outlined in POP 442.** We

¹ <https://oregon-pip.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Statewide-Report-2021-October.pdf>

must continue to support and build better systems of care for *all* children, especially those with medical complexities, to ensure lifelong health and wellness for children across the state.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being in Oregon. We urge your support for the inclusion of POP 442 in the OHA budget (SB 5525).

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2023 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda