

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety
From: Paul Aubry, Attorney at Law
Date: 4-20-23
Re: Support for SB 5532 and POPs 103 and 112 - Critical Investments in Juvenile Defense

Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans, and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety:

My name is Paul. I am a Juvenile Law attorney representing children and parents in Dependency cases and youth in Delinquency cases. I urge your support of SB 5532 and the POPs. As a juvenile defense attorney, I specifically want to highlight the need for POP 103 to expand PCRCP and POP 112, which would designate legal representation in juvenile delinquency, juvenile dependency, and termination-of-parental-rights cases as a mandated caseload, that is, representation required by the state or federal constitutions or statutes or as a result of court actions.

I have been doing this work for more than 15 years. Lawyers and their support staff play a crucial role in limiting the harm and trauma that results when children are separated from their families, moved repeatedly to and from multiple foster homes, kept in the system longer than is necessary without permanency and generally cannot rely on the current foster care system to meet their needs.

I work in a PCRCP (Parent-Child Representation Program) county. PCRCP helps ensure attorneys have adequate time and resources to spend with their clients and on cases. We have reasonable caseloads (80 is considered full), better compensation for attorneys than for attorneys in non-PCRCP counties, access to social work case managers who serve as part of the legal team, and enhanced support and oversight by OPDS.

I love this work. I work on average 50 hours a week, including evenings and weekends. I do not take traditional vacations where most people disengage completely from the work. Clients need their legal needs met when crises arise. Timely communication and action means everything to clients' success.

I take on this burden, however, knowing that I am compensated fairly. I am able to hire highly experienced and dedicated staff who make similar sacrifices. Without the pay rate of the PCRCP I would never be able to train, support and retain such amazing support staff. This work is filled with vicarious trauma and the PCRCP rate reflects this reality. The Oregon State Bar Standards and Practices for Juvenile Law practitioners are very high standards for lawyers to meet. The PCRCP rate facilitates that goal.

The PCRCP also provides Case Managers specially trained in addiction/recovery, domestic violence, child development and other important skills areas. I am able to partner with my Case Managers to better connect with and support clients. The PCRCP is a proven success: when we began this program as one of the first pilot counties in Columbia County, within the first 2 years we helped reduce the number of children in foster care and the overall number of open child welfare cases by approximately 40%.

I strongly urge your support of SB 5532, the POPs, and especially POPs 103 and 112. Thank you for taking the time to consider my input and I am happy to speak with any Committee members in further detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Aubry", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Aubry, OSB #011906