



1785 NE Sandy Blvd #300  
Portland, OR 97232  
youthrightsjustice.org  
(503) 232-2540

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
From: Heather Busby, Executive Director

Re: **SB 5532 – POPs 103 and 112**

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Evans and Members of the Committee,

Founded in 1975, Youth, Rights & Justice is Oregon's only nonprofit public defense provider dedicated exclusively to juvenile law. Each year, we provide holistic, client-centered representation to around 1000 children, youth, and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system. Additionally, we provide early defense advocacy to keep families together and educational advocacy so children can attend, graduate, and succeed in school. In 2021, we launched our juvenile expunction clinic.

YRJ urges the Legislature to adequately fund public defense in Oregon, including an expansion of the Parent-Child Representation Program (PCRP) statewide. We support SB 5532, and are in strong support specifically for POPs 103 and 112.

In the midst of a public defense crisis in our state, the PCRP program is an example of how investment in a holistic model of public defense, with caseload maximums and additional supports built in, can make a difference in the lives of attorneys, clients, and ultimately, achieve positive, cost-saving outcomes.

YRJ has been a PCRP provider since the program was expanded to Multnomah County in 2020. This program uses a multidisciplinary approach to legal representation to achieve positive outcomes for children and families and decrease the use of foster care and time to permanency for children.

A 2011 study conducted in Washington state found that multidisciplinary representation models, like the PCRP, increased the speed to all types of permanency. When comparing counties in Washington that utilized the multidisciplinary representation program to those that did not, the speed to reunification, adoption, and guardianship were all significantly faster (11%- reunification; 83%- adoption; 102%- guardianship).<sup>i</sup>

In Oregon, the PCRCP enables better experiences with the child welfare system using caseload limits for providers, to allow them to spend more time focused on individual cases, as well as additional training and oversight. Our clients also have access to in-house social workers who work alongside attorneys to meet our clients' psychosocial needs and provide support and connection to vital social services. Due to the unique holistic approach of the PCRCP model, our clients often develop a close working relationship with our social workers that allows them to feel more comfortable and leads to better outcomes for families.

Here is an example from one of our PCRCP attorneys of the difference this model makes:

*“Our social workers have been instrumental in many of my cases. In one specific case, the social worker not only made sure that the parent had the items they needed to care for the child, but also communicated with family members and other service providers to bridge any gaps. With the help of her hard work, that child was reunited with their parent, and the case was dismissed by the first review hearing.*

*In another case, the social worker was able to communicate with a family member who did not speak English and get information about the children's history that would not have been available otherwise. He was also able to be a calming influence in hard circumstances and craft creative solutions to any problems that came up.*

*In yet another case, our client's social worker was able to work together with the parent's PCRCP social worker to secure housing for the family, the only barrier to the children returning home. Together they looked for available homes, viewed them in person, and communicated with property owners to make sure the family could be together as soon as possible.”*

The PCRCP model is a sound investment into the future of Oregon's children and families, in the public defense system, and ultimately, child welfare. It has made a profound difference in the practice of juvenile law in Multnomah County and for our agency and its attorneys. We encourage you to approve funding for the expansion of the PCRCP model to all of Oregon's counties.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Heather Busby  
Executive Director

---

<sup>i</sup> Courtney, M. E., & Hook, J. L. (2012). Evaluation of the impact of enhanced parental legal representation on the timing of permanency outcomes for children in foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 34(7), 1337-1343, <https://partnersforourchildren.org/resources/publications/evaluation-impact-enhanced-parental-legal-representation-timing-permanency>.

# SUPPORT THE PARENT CHILD REPRESENTATION PROGRAM

## PCR IN OREGON

In 2013, the Oregon State Legislature funded the Parent Child Representation Program (PCR), a pilot program developed by the Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS) to provide quality legal representation for parents and children in juvenile dependency and parental termination cases. The PCR, modeled after the successful Washington State Parental Representation Program (PRP), uses a multidisciplinary model of legal representation to achieve positive outcomes for children and families and decrease the use of foster care and the time to permanency for children. In addition to multidisciplinary collaboration, the PCR provides caseload limits for attorneys, additional oversight and training, and access to specialized services to ensure that parents and children have better experiences with the child welfare system.



## BENEFITS

### High Quality Legal Representation

An attorney's increased communication with clients and legal advocacy can help steer the case toward reunification.

### Multidisciplinary Client Advocacy & Support

Independent social workers can increase parent engagement and provide advocacy for flexible and creative solutions.

### Positive Outcomes

Children in PCR counties spend 3 1/2 fewer months in foster care and are 13% more likely to achieve permanency within 12 months of removal than children in non-PCR counties, according to OPDS.

### Cost Effective

Reducing the time children spend in foster care and the length of cases saves money and resources.

## STUDY FINDINGS

In 2011, a study was published examining the impact of Washington State's PRP. The program had multiple key components, like reduced caseloads, clear professional expectations, tailored professional development, program oversight, and access to social work staff. The study found that the program increased the speed to all types of permanency, and therefore reducing the number of children in care for long periods.

The speed of reunification was 11% faster for those in a PRP county, the speed to adoption was 83% faster, and the speed to guardianship was 102% faster. The study also found that "enhanced parental representation is associated with an increase in the rate of family reunification."

## EXPERIENCES FROM YRJ STAFF ATTORNEYS

---

“The addition of social workers under the PCRCP allows me to no longer feel like I have to fill the role of social worker for my client. In addition to connecting clients to services, there are many small but enormously helpful things that can be achieved in a much quicker fashion by having someone dedicated to those tasks. As a part of the team, our case managers can take clients food, support visitation in hospitals, deliver car seats, or just spend time building rapport and emotionally support them throughout the process.”

“Having a bilingual, culturally-fluent case manager to connect with my Spanish-speaking clients has been life-changing for me and my clients in terms of client engagement in their cases. The case manager goes so much further than an interpreter in truly connecting with my clients to understand and help them meet their goals.”

“Our social workers have been instrumental in many of my cases. In one specific case, the social worker not only made sure that the parent had the items they needed to care for the child, but also communicated with family members and other service providers to bridge any gaps. With the help of all of her hard work, that child was reunited with their parent, and the case was dismissed by the first review hearing. In another case, the social worker was able to communicate with a family member who did not speak English and get information about the children’s history that would not have been available otherwise. He was also able to be a calming influence in hard circumstances and craft creative solutions to any problems that came up. In yet another case, the social worker was able to work together with the parent’s PCRCP social worker to secure housing for the family, the only barrier to the children returning home. Together they looked for available homes, viewed them in person, and communicated with property owners to make sure the family could be together as soon as possible.”

The logo for Youth, Rights & Justice is a black circle containing the text "Youth, Rights & Justice" in a white, serif font. The text is arranged with "Youth," on the top line, "Rights &" on the middle line, and "Justice" on the bottom line.

Youth,  
Rights &  
Justice

Youth, Rights & Justice is a non-profit juvenile defense provider serving Oregon youth and families since 1975. YRJ advances the rights of children, parents, and families through advocacy in the courts, schools, legislature, and community.

*For more information, visit [youthrightsjustice.org](http://youthrightsjustice.org), call (503) 232-2540 or contact Heather Busby at [heather.b@youthrightsjustice.org](mailto:heather.b@youthrightsjustice.org)*



# YOUTH, RIGHTS & JUSTICE IS A NONPROFIT JUVENILE PUBLIC DEFENSE PROVIDER SERVING OREGON YOUTH AND FAMILIES SINCE 1975



## CLIENT-CENTERED REPRESENTATION

YRJ is court-appointed to represent youth, children and parents in the juvenile court system. Our holistic representation model ensures our clients' voices are heard and their rights are respected. We bring a trauma-informed lens to all of our work.

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

We use the power of the courts and legislative process to address systemic problems.

**YOUTH, RIGHTS & JUSTICE ADVANCES THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND FAMILIES THROUGH ADVOCACY IN THE COURTS, SCHOOLS, LEGISLATURE, AND COMMUNITY.**



### BREAKING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

For 20 years, our SchoolWorks program has worked to keep young people in class and succeeding in school through legal advocacy in the education system.



### CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES

Our Record Relief Juvenile Expunction clinic removes barriers to success. Our Youth Educational Supports (YES) program connects youth leaving OYA custody with education.



### KEEPING FAMILIES STABLE

The Family Defense Project, our pre-petition representation, provides the legal advocacy and social supports to prevent foster care placement.

**YOUTHRIGHTSJUSTICE.ORG**  
**INFO@YOUTHRIGHTSJUSTICE.ORG**  
**503-232-2540**

YRJ's public defense work is funded by the State of Oregon. Our SchoolWorks program serves foster youth through the Portland Children's Levy and the YES program is funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The rest of YRJ's work is funded through individual contributions and foundation support.