



February 6, 2024

Chair Kropf and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my support of HB 4140, and to thank the committee for your time and attention to this important bill.

I am the Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Center of Jackson County, which serves Jackson County. We provide forensic interviews, forensic medical exams, therapy interventions and advocacy and support services.

HB 4140 is a bipartisan and bicameral bill that adds critical stability to Children's Advocacy Center funding, and makes important new investments that target mental and behavioral health needs.

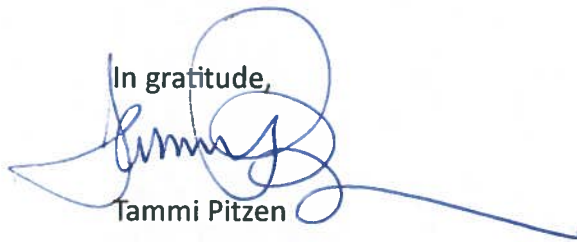
- **HB 4140, with the forthcoming amendment, will clarify that the increased investment that CACs received in 2021 and 2023 (\$6M) should be considered current service level moving forward.** This funding has been critical to increase capacity at CACs, largely by funding new staff positions. At my CAC, we have been using the funding to support staff, provide staff with tools needed to do fulfill their roles, provide training to our staff, and to do much needed repairs and safety improvements to our building. CACs must be able to count on stable funding in order to maintain these important positions.
- **HB 4140 also makes \$5M in new investments to meet the escalating need for services, with a focus on increasing access to mental and behavioral health providers.** We know that real healing happens when children are able to access the life-changing mental health treatment provided by professionals who are trained in child trauma-focused modalities.
- **Plus, the bill includes \$150K for hair drug testing, a service that DHS asks CACs to provide, but rarely pays for. This means CACs are required to cover this cost through private funding sources. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the number of hair tests conducted more than doubled from 2021 - 2022.**

Our Medical Department has been providing hair strand testing as part of our Drug Endangered Child protocol. We have provided 101 tests. 88 of those tests came back positive. Very few of these tests come back positive for cannabinoids only. Most are coming back positive for environmental exposure to multiple substances with the highest positives being for fentanyl, methamphetamines, amphetamines, and cannabinoids. The majority of the tests have been conducted on children age 5 and under. Six of those tested were under the age of 1. Our organization has taken on the full costs of conducting these exams. Year to date we have spent nearly \$28,000.00 on laboratory costs associated with the hair strand test alone. This does not include the costs for the head to toe medical evaluation or time spent collecting and preparing the hair strands to be tested. The number of tests needing to be done will continue to increase if our current trend is a predictor of the future need. These tests provide valuable information to help DHS determine safety and risk for children involved in reports of abuse or neglect.

If this bill passes, it will mean that our organization will have funding to continue to provide stellar evidence based interventions to children who experience abuse and it will mean that we have funding to sustain the growth needed to continue to meet the demand on services by our community.

I respectfully urge your support of the concepts and new funding contained in HB 4140. Your support of these concepts and funding makes tangible differences for the communities and children that we serve.

In gratitude,



Tammi Pitzen
Executive Director