



12 February 2024

Housing Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
Oregon Legislature

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem, Oregon. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$70 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty, in addition to a range of emergency services that shelter the homeless and serve wildfire victims. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, and sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council and the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities. I also Chair the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge. And for many years, I have been an advocate for vulnerable residents of our state.

MWVCAA serves low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty. Those services include 815 slots in Head Start and two, ten-bed Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelters, which are part of our more than 300 total shelter beds

On behalf of our Agency and those in poverty, I write to urge your support for SB 4086-2, which would create two advisory committee to evaluate the scope and role of ODHS in child abuse investigations, and provide modest funding to hire a talented facilitator with public policy expertise, which in my experience is critical to the success of advisory committees. This bill would also provide stipends for folks with lived experience, funds for research and analysis and allow the creation of an actionable written set of recommendations to the legislature.

The complexity of the conversations around child abuse investigations increases each year, especially given the extraordinarily complex behaviors we have seen in the runaway and homeless youth population in recent years. These concerns will continue to grow in the years that come, as the full social effects of the pandemic upon youth play out.

There are many, many stakeholders interested in this conversation, as any change in ODHS's role could create significant changes in policy that will impact the provider

community and vulnerable children across Oregon. In order to create the best set of recommendations from this process, ODHS really needs the support of a skilled facilitator with public policy experience.

HB 4086-2, in specific, will pull together two committee of experts including those with lived experience to recommend:

- jurisdiction of ODHS on child abuse investigations,
- an updated definition of child abuse,
- best practices for conducting an abuse investigation,
- Explore best practices around youth exhibiting problematic sexual behavior,
- oversight of the recommendations that come from this work.

We urge your support for HB 4086-2, and recommend that it be passed out of Committee and prioritized for funding with Ways & Means.

Respectfully,



Jimmy Jones
Executive Director