

Early Childhood and Human Services Committee
Oregon State Legislature
Testimony May 20, 2025
Rebecca Read, Seaside Oregon

My name is Rebecca Read, resident of Seaside Oregon

Thank you, Committee Members, for the opportunity to speak with you, and for your work.

Today, I am here to ask for your help in making the necessary improvements to our state's family court system. My 7 year old grandson, Liam, has been a resident of the Trillium Psychiatric Residential Treatment Center in Portland for most of this past year, since June of 2024. My son, Jesse, is Liam's non-custodial father. In Trillium's online posting it says Trillium "offers short-term, on-site psychiatric services for young people requiring 24-hour support". They take children as young as 6 years old. Liam was 6 when his mother determined his diagnosis of ADHD warranted this level of care. Nearly a year into this treatment Liam is in fact deteriorating, not gaining ground. His care has included a variety of drug treatments that have included the increasing and decreasing of drug dosages, and limited treatment and family counseling, to the detriment of his behavior.

Why do I bring this case to your attention? Because Liam is a victim of a broken system, which has short-changed him through inadequate evaluation and investigation by the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Protective Services and the Clackamas County family court system. Liam's mother early in Liam's life determined she didn't want to be in a relationship with my son. That is her right. But she did not have the right to dismiss court orders to cooperate with Liam's father, and prevent him from having involvement in decision making on Liam's behalf. Family court is charged with determining what's best for the family, particularly children, its most vulnerable members. But the court has fallen drastically short of advocating for Liam's welfare. It has been an exhaustive battle to press for oversight and follow-through in upholding court orders.

I know you've heard the term "pipeline to prison". There are direct pathways that lead to prison, especially for children who fall through the cracks and fall behind. There is no greater sadness than to watch children go without the help they need to thrive. I think of the overused term "pay now or pay later". We need to adequately-fund our court system to front-load prevention instead of waiting until individuals fall behind and end up needing more services later. It breaks my heart to say that Liam may be heading for a troubled life because our systems are not equipped to advocate for him now.

We all own this. This is a statewide problem. I understand your difficult position. You're trying to stretch a dollar and determine which programs get help and which ones have to get in line. But we're talking about our most vulnerable population. These are Oregonians at the beginning of their lives, while there is still a chance to guide them in the right direction. All it takes is the will of the people. I join my friend, Ann Samuelson, who is also advocating for her grandson. We are asking you to help us be the firewall for keeping our children safe.