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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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FAMILY YMCA OF MARION & POLK COUNTIES
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January 23, 2025
House Early Childhood and Community Services (HECCS) committee
Re: Court and Community Care Program

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 2842, which provides funding for the Mid-Valley Court and Community Care program in Marion County. This program is a part of the YMCA's mission to promote healthy children and families in our local community. Court and Community Care is a *free* drop-in childcare program currently housed at our Downtown Salem YMCA. We provide children with a safe and nurturing place to go while their caretakers attend court, participate in treatment programs, or address other important legal, financial, medical, or mental health needs.

Children who are brought to court are exposed to adult situations, often involving substance abuse or domestic violence. Harsh words, confrontations, seeing family members in handcuffs -- these are traumatic experiences for young children who must tag along when family members are involved in court actions. Court and Community Care plays a vital role in protecting children in our community and ensuring access to justice for families who lack resources, including childcare.

In addition to attending court proceedings, caretakers of minor children often need to access services, such as meetings with mental health professionals, medical professionals, parole officers, government benefit personnel, and potential employers. Court and Community Care provides caretakers with free drop-in childcare while they address those important needs, ensuring that caretakers can provide a safe, healthy home for their children.

Court and Community Care first opened in Marion County in 2017 as CourtCare, thanks to public funding through a pilot program in Marion and Polk Counties combined with private donations. The YMCA partnered with Marion County Lawyers Charitable Corporation (MCLCC) to serve over 500 children during the two-year pilot. Last year, the YMCA renewed its partnership with MCLCC to resume operations on a part-time basis and with a limited capacity, supported by MCLCC's private fundraising. HB 2842 provides public funds that, in combination with private funds, will allow us to expand Court and Community Care to full time with increased capacity.

Court and Community Care has a proven track record of protecting young children from traumatic courtroom situations and allowing caretakers to focus on their critical needs without distraction. I urge you to support the request for additional funding of the Court and Community Care program in Marion County, as we have seen the relief this program has brought to our community.

Sincerely,

Tim Sinatra
CEO, Family YMCA of Marion & Polk Counties