



February 1, 2025

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

Re: HB 2842: Court and Community Care Program

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and Committee Members,

We write to you in support of HB 2842 and the request for funding to expand the Mid Valley Court and Community Care program. Our Marion County program reopened in June 2024 at the downtown Salem YMCA. It is exciting news that our partner, Polk County, has just confirmed their ability to reopen and expand their program with funding as well.

Court and Community Care is a program that provides a safe and nurturing place for children while their parents are in the courtroom or in need of free, drop-in childcare to complete important legal, financial, medical, or mental health needs. We first opened at the downtown Salem YMCA in 2017 and led a successful program. We closed when the YMCA was demolished for their rebuild and were unable to restart at another facility when Covid-19 struck the world. Marion and Polk County's 2-year pilot program had great success, serving approximately 1,500 children.

Court and Community Care is a resource that is vital to our community and ensures access to justice for low-income families who need assistance to exercise their legal rights by providing free childcare. Without Court and Community Care, children are brought into courtrooms and exposed to situations that are only appropriate for adults. Additionally, it allows caretakers of children to attend business that is necessary for their family's wellbeing, such as meeting with mental health professionals, medical professionals, parole officers, government benefit personnel, and job interviews, without bringing their children to those stressful appointments.

Court and Community Care is a compassionate way to protect young children from trauma and provide a place for caretakers to take care of critical needs. I urge you to support the request for additional funding of the Court and Community Care program in Marion and Polk County, as we have seen the relief this program has brought to our community.

Sincerely,

Rob Johnston, President

Marion County Charitable Lawyers Corporation

(DBA Marion County Court and Community Care)