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February 7, 2025

To: Rep. Jason Kropf, Chair
Rep. Willy Chotzen, Vice-Chair
Rep. Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Alison S. Kelley, JD
Chief Executive Officer

Re: **Support for HB 3196**

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

Liberty House urges your support for HB 3196 which will provide critical funding to keep victims services in Oregon at Current Service Levels.

Liberty House is the Children's Advocacy Center for Marion and Polk Counties. Annually, we serve approx. 1,000 children, Newborn to age 18. **Our essential work is comprehensive coordinated care** bringing critical, lifesaving clinical and therapeutic help for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma, and grief.

The funds in HB 3196 support Liberty House along with the 23 other CACs around Oregon in our work for children and families who have experienced abuse and trauma. **HB 3196 will provide \$21.5 million to backfill cuts to the funds we receive from the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program.** These funds are vitally important to us as a CAC in order that we can provide essential services for children who have been abused.

The federal VOCA program is the primary source of federal grants for victim services, including services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, attempted homicide, and other crimes. Oregon was recently alerted that federal VOCA funds are being cut by 42%.

- **At Liberty House, we receive around \$250,000 annually in VOCA funds.** Funding for CACs is already tenuous. **A 42% cut to our VOCA support will mean layoffs of two clinic employees, reducing the amount of children we are able to serve. Please note that Liberty House serves Marion and Polk counties, two counties with large rural areas among the most underserved regions of Oregon.**
- **It has taken years to recruit, hire, train and maintain a highly qualified staff.** Loss of clinic staff members will set us back years.

The impact on victim services will be devastating without these funds. The \$21.5 million in HB 3196 would protect Children's Advocacy Centers and other organizations supporting victims of violence such as District Attorney Victim Assistance Programs (DAVAPs), Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) Programs, and Campus Sexual Assault Programs.

This funding need is urgent. The Emergency Board took an important first step in Sept. 2024 to help with VOCA cuts but a larger problem is coming this Summer. We need the Oregon Legislature to take action now on behalf of victims of violence and to backfill cuts to VOCA and protect these services. While Congress *may* take action, nothing is certain. If that relief comes, it will not come until after programs in Oregon are cut this Summer.

We urgently request the Oregon Legislature's help and ask you to pass HB 3196 with \$21.5 million in funding.