

February 28, 2025

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Re: HB 3229

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodman, Vice-Chair Nelson, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Relief Nursery, I am writing in support of HB 3229, sponsored by Representative Nancy Nathanson.

Relief Nursery, with sites in Eugene and Springfield, serves Lane County's most vulnerable families through various means, but our fastest growing program is Mental Health. The level of need for mental health support our families experience has never been higher. Every meeting I attend, every new family I meet, I hear about increased trauma and fear.

Relief Nursery focuses on "high-risk" families and children. Without the intensive early intervention we provide, these children will face severe obstacles to becoming productive and contributing members of our society. We have expanded our Mental Health program significantly over the past year in order to meet these needs, and I foresee it continuing to grow substantially in the future.

As with any new endeavor, our expansion involves risk. Taking on a new clinician sometimes takes up to four months for them to be credentialed through OHA and Lane County's two CCO's. Without credentialing, Relief Nursery is unable to bill for these desperately needed services. So, we take a risk. We start the credentialing process, we provide the services, and we hope. We hope that all of the I's are dotted and T's are crossed, and that eventually, a few months down the line, we will hear back that our risk was rewarded, and we can submit the billing for that clinician.

For non-profits such as ours, that risk is nerve-wracking. To compete with the pay from private practices and hire experienced, trained clinicians, Relief Nursery has prioritized making clinician pay competitive. Months of that salary, with fingers crossed, is a big stretch for organizations like Relief Nursery. When hiring multiple clinicians at the same time to meet the needs of our vulnerable populations, the risk multiplies.

HB 3329 does not solve every problem, but it is a huge step forward in helping agencies onboard critically needed clinicians, credentialed in a reasonable timeframe, and with a minimum of pain. Please, pass this legislation, and take a concrete step to making Oregon's Behavioral Health system that much more effective.

Sincerely,

Terrence S. Killian, LCSW

Mental Health Program Manager

Relief Nursery, Inc.