



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Linthicum, and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services:

The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) wants and needs grievance and investigation processes that are accessible, transparent, and thorough. These essential tools let youth communicate and escalate concerns and reinforce youth and staff safety.

To that end, we submit this testimony on Senate Bill 915 without taking a position on the measure to provide technical information about current processes and improvements currently underway. We are invested in partnering with you, other agencies, accountability partners, providers, and legislators to review and make any necessary changes to practices and programs that will improve outcomes for youth.

When an allegation of child abuse occurs in a youth correctional facility, in accordance with mandatory reporting laws and as directed by policy, OYA staff make a child abuse report to law enforcement. For OYA, that call is made to the Oregon State Police (OSP). Reporting to and coordinating with OSP has been our operational practice for many years. SB 915 shifts OYA's legal obligation, requiring all reports to go to the Office of Training Investigations and Safety (OTIS) at the Oregon Department of Human Services.

At this point, we do not have enough information to know how this shift would impact the speed, thoroughness, or conclusions of investigations, in large part because this is a complex and nuanced area of practice. Recognizing this, the legislature directed the creation of a workgroup to look specifically at child abuse reporting and investigations (2023's SB 4086). This includes a focus on processes most appropriate for youth correctional settings.

The workgroup, facilitated by an outside entity, has been a productive venue to focus on child-safety-centered solutions. OYA has been fully engaged, and the sessions have been collaborative and rigorous, with multiple perspectives represented. As SB 4086 required, the workgroup will advance recommendations to the Legislature in six months (September 2025). We believe these recommendations will help us achieve an effective

and comprehensive child abuse reporting and investigation process, including best practices for youth correctional facilities.

We appreciate your consideration of this important bill and look forward to engaging with you and other partners on this topic.

Respectfully submitted.

Deborah Martin  
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