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March 19, 2025

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Scharf, Vice-Chair Nguyen, and Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,

I am Dr. Monique Carroll, a pediatrician and the President of the Board of Directors at Jasper Mountain/SAFE Center. Founded in 1982, Jasper Mountain provides residential mental health treatment and a school day program for children aged 4 to 13 at two campuses outside of Springfield, Oregon. We serve children with serious concerns, including traumatic stress, violence, sexual misbehavior, and attachment issues. We all know that mental health services, particularly for the most vulnerable and affected children are lacking in Oregon. We serve these highest need children without using any medication to sedate them during difficult behaviors.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3835, which would modify the framework established in SB 710 regarding the investigation of child abuse and neglect. While well-intentioned, SB 710 has had significant negative implications for our ability to care for our high-needs children. We cannot provide services without our dedicated staff. SB 710 has significantly increased the stress and danger faced by the staff, without any corresponding benefit to our patients.

Injuries to staff rose significantly after SB 710 despite a greater investment in de-escalation training. For instance, in a typical month, February 2024, we had 195 interventions resulting in zero injuries to children and 7 injuries to staff, which included ringing in the ears, bite marks, back injuries and an injured shoulder. In 2024, we had 81 reported staff injuries, compared to 13 staff injuries in 2019. Our number of SAIF claims in 2019 was 10, by 2023 we had more than doubled to 25 claimed (November 2023). Staff turnover rates have also increased from 12.7% in 2019 to 47.58% in 2024.

This environment limits our ability to admit and treat children. We have had to raise staffing ratios from 1:4 to, at times, 1:2 to address safety concerns. Significant injuries to staff have placed further stress on the remaining staff to pick up the extra work. In some instances, we've had to emergently discharge children due to the severity of impact on the staff. This means sending children home before their treatment is complete, resulting in danger to other children in the home, parents, and even pets. Unfortunately, one of the impacts of SB 710, is disruption and delay in appropriate treatment for these children.

In 2024, we submitted 731 reports under SB 710, of which zero were substantiated. This number represents our in-house impact, and impacts our partners with DHS, ODHS, and OTIS. Staff had to work additional hours most days to accommodate for the number incident reports. We had to reshuffle our entire schedule, going from 8 hours shifts 5 days a week to 10 hour shifts 4 days a week. This is to allow for treatment teams to have the time to write the detailed reports needed following these incidents and to provide them with an additional day off in which to recover from the increase in incidents and injuries. We

had to hire a specialist whose full-time job it is to review incident reports, taking resources away from our treatment mission.

Please provide some relief to our staff and help us serve more children. Oregon needs us to serve more children. We appreciate the desire to protect children that motivated SB 710, but its implementation has had significant negative consequences on our ability to serve the very children it is meant to protect. HB 3835 preserves SB 710's improved protection for children and expands our ability to help them.

Thank you for your consideration,

Monique Carroll, DO
President, Jasper Mountain Board of Directors
McKenzie Pediatrics