

July 1, 2021

The Honorable Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
900 Court Street, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301-4047

RE: Concerns about Senate Bill 710

Dear Governor Brown:

Mental health treatment programs, providers and hospitals that serve Oregon children with severe mental health disorders have serious concerns about the impact of Senate Bill 710 on our system of care. While we strongly support efforts to reduce the use of restraints across child serving programs, the challenge we have with Senate Bill 710 is that it doesn't address all of the root issues at hand, and instead may exacerbate existing systematic problems.

Throughout the session we have committed to increased transparency and being collaborative in finding solutions that are founded in evidence and analysis of the problems that exist. Most notably we made recommendations to extend the timeline for implementation and commission a panel to develop a comprehensive review of regulatory practices most likely to support safety, learning, and quality improvement. We are aware that Senator Gelser has committed to working with a small group of stakeholder and agency representatives following this legislative session on some of the acute implementation issues. However, we believe there still needs to be a larger, more inclusive group to do this work to lead to meaningful improvement in the experience of youth, families and the staff that serve them.

Without an informed approach, that prioritizes proper training and supervision, integrates trauma informed practices, and supports a continuum of care for complex children, we can expect further erosion of services available to serve severely acute children. In fact, we are already seeing the impact, with community-based mental health treatment providers unable to accept high-acuity children due to staffing and safety concerns because of Senate Bill 710 requirements.

In order to address the root issues and begin understanding the impact that this bill will have on Oregon's most vulnerable children, we respectfully request that you include a signing statement if you decide to move this legislation forward. Direction to the Department of Human Services to convene a committee to monitor implementation challenges, track impacts on access, impacts on work force hiring and retention, and exploration of evidence informed strategies that are alternatives to current law should adverse outcomes occur.

Thank you for your continued commitment to improving access and quality of children's mental health in Oregon, we look forward to continued collaboration.

Sincerely,

