



Oregon Alliance

3/20/25

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Linthicum, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

The Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs appreciates the opportunity to provide input on SB 1159. While we recognize the importance of ensuring accountability and oversight in child welfare, we continue to have concerns about the bill as introduced.

We would like to highlight the following concerns:

Section 4: Investigations The bill grants the Child Advocate (CA) the authority to investigate administrative actions in response to a complaint or on the CA's own initiative if they reasonably believe the action is unreasonable, unfair, or otherwise objectionable, even if it complies with existing law. This provision removes the objectivity of an investigation and raises concerns about potential overreach and lack of clarity in standards for such inquiries.

Section 5: Obstructing a CA Investigation The bill increases the penalty for obstructing an investigation from a Class C misdemeanor under the GAO to a Class A misdemeanor under the CA. This heightened penalty, which includes an increased maximum penalty and jail time with a three-year record retention, appears disproportionate to the nature of the offense.

We are particularly concerned about potential conflicts with HIPAA regulations for youth receiving behavioral health services at a Child-Caring Agency (CCA). Under the bill, a CCA could be placed at legal risk while awaiting the required written Releases of Information (ROIs) or court orders before providing sensitive health information. This could result in an entity being charged with obstructing an investigation and facing a Class A misdemeanor.

Section 6: Procedures to Maintain Confidentiality The bill requires CCAs to cooperate fully and provide unlimited information without necessarily knowing which child the inquiry pertains to, due to confidentiality mandates. This raises significant due process concerns, as CCAs may be compelled to disclose broad categories of sensitive information without clear guidelines on scope or necessity.

We respectfully urge the committee to consider these concerns and seek further clarification on how these provisions will be implemented in practice.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working together to strengthen protections for vulnerable youth while maintaining a balanced and effective oversight system.

Sincerely,

Vera Stoullil
CEO, Oregon Alliance

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