



Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association
Representing Oregon's County Juvenile Departments
www.ojdda.org

OJDDA Supports HB 3835

The Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association (OJDDA) is in support of HB 3835 written to fix unintended consequences of current law related to the definitions of child abuse, investigative processes and what entity conducts abuse investigations.

Current law has had a negative impact on the ability of providers of behavioral health services and education systems to keep youth and their staff members safe. In 2024, the Office of Training and Safety (OTIS) conducted 2001 investigations with a 33% founded rate, causing a tremendous amount of stress, fear, lost time at work and workplace disruption for many cases where no abuse was occurring. This is due to the low standard of proof for OTIS to make a finding, and the expansion of abuse investigations into lawful, safe, and respectful interventions by trained adults to protect youth and those around them when youth behavior escalates in care settings. This is a concerning disincentive for individuals to seek or remain employed in a high stress, high risk occupation of caring for children in congregate settings, as the consistent difficulty in finding adequate staffing in this industry shows. We need to re-examine our abuse reporting and response system to get it right so we aren't pushing caring adults out of the child care fields and are addressing the adults who should not be working with children.

During the informational hearing Oregon's youth commitment rate was brought up in testimony. OJDDA wishes to ensure that the public understands what is meant by Oregon's youth commitment rate. Commitment of young people to the Oregon Youth Authority happens either by residential placement or to close custody placement at a Youth Correctional Facility (YCF). By current design, the only way county juvenile departments can access behavioral health residential treatment for young people with whom they work is to commit the youth to either the Oregon Youth Authority or the Department of Human Services. OJDDA shares the wish of all Oregonians to reduce our youth commitment rate. We support increased financial support to county juvenile departments or other mechanisms by which county juvenile departments can advocate and place youth in residential behavioral health placements without committing them to the Oregon Youth Authority or Department of Human Services.

Thank you for your consideration.

For additional information contact:
Lara Smith @ lsmith@smithgr.com

