

Lynn Freeman LMFT
19118 Cartwright Court
Bend, OR 97702

April 8, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and Members of the Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Public Safety,

My name is Lynn Freeman and I am writing as a board member of KIDS Center, an accredited Children's Advocacy Center serving Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Harney, Sherman, and Wheeler Counties, as well as, by request, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs. I am fervently asking the Legislature to provide funding for Children's Advocacy Centers at the Current Service Level (CSL) for this next two year period.

All 24 of Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers now face significant funding cuts that threaten children's access to the vital services historically funded through the Oregon Department of Justice (ODOJ), Crime Victims and Survivors Services Division. KIDS Center has provided free child abuse evaluation and treatment to more than 17,000 children and adults in Central Oregon over the past 30 years and the need continues to grow.

I respectfully request your support of the following two measures, which will help ensure Current Service Levels for KIDS Center and our fellow Children's Advocacy Centers statewide:

1. HB 3196 - \$18.5M to Backfill Federal Cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding: Children's Advocacy Centers receive federal funding through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which is being cut by 42%. After the close of the 2024 Session, Oregon was notified that this federal funding will be reduced, and without intervention, KIDS Center will lose over \$138,000. HB 3196 (2025) provides \$18.5M in one-time funding to backfill these cuts for VOCA grantees, as well as \$3M for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). This funding will support Children's Advocacy Centers, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs, Campus Sexual Assault Programs, and District Attorney Victims Assistance Programs, all of which are facing the same 42% reduction.

2. DOJ POP #327 - Stabilizing State Dollars for Children's Advocacy Centers: The 2021 and 2023 Legislatures allocated \$6M to help Children's Advocacy Centers increase our capacity. KIDS Center used these funds to serve 13% more children in 2023 and another 5% more in 2024. In 2025, we are on track to serve 10% more children than in 2024. These children are referred to us by law enforcement or ODOJ-Child Welfare during active investigations. DOJ POP #327 ensures this funding continues at the Current Service Level, enabling us to meet the growing need for services in our communities.

KIDS Center's services are essential to the health and safety of the six-county communities we serve. If these funds are not allocated, KIDS Center will be forced to reduce staffing, increase wait times for access to services, and help fewer children at a time when the need is rising. A loss of funding will lead to long-term psychological harm for child abuse victims and a weakened justice system's ability to protect vulnerable children.

Please give your strongest consideration to fulfilling this critical funding request for Children's Advocacy Centers during this Legislative Session.

Thank you for your service and commitment to the children of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Lynn Freeman LMFT
Board Member, KIDS Center