



Klamath-Lake CARES

(Child Abuse Response and Evaluation Services)

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An affiliated program of Sky Lakes Medical Center.

April 10, 2025

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

My name is Samantha Fenner, and I'm writing on behalf of Klamath-Lake CARES, the Child Advocacy Center serving Klamath and Lake Counties. We urgently request that the Legislature provide funding for Children's Advocacy Centers at Current Service Level this biennium. Children's Advocacy Centers receive their funding through the Oregon Department of Justice, Crime Victims and Survivors Services Division. We greatly appreciate AG Rayfield and his team's commitment to victims in this state. This agency is an incredible partner to Children's Advocacy Centers.

All 24 Oregon Children's Advocacy Centers are facing a significant funding cliff that threatens children's access to the critical services that Children's Advocacy Centers provide.

I urgently request your support of the below funding, which will provide for Current Service Levels for the Children's Advocacy Centers:

- HB 3196- \$18.5M to Backfill Federal Cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA): Children's Advocacy Centers and other victim services providers receive federal funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). Following the close of the 2024 Session, Oregon was alerted that this federal funding is being reduced by 42%. Without your action, projected funding losses range from \$10,000 to \$498,000 per Children's Advocacy Center, with an average loss of \$122,794.
- HB 3196 (2025) provides \$18.5M in one-time dollars to backfill the cuts to the current grantees of the VOCA program and provides \$3M for Court Appointed Special Advocates. Children's Advocacy Centers, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs, Campus Sexual Assault Programs, and District Attorney Victims Assistance Programs are all current grantees of the VOCA program and are facing 42% cuts.
- DOJ POP #327: Stabilizing State Dollars: The 2021 and 2023 Legislatures allocated \$6M in funding to Children's Advocacy Centers to increase their capacity to serve more children. This funding was successful in increasing capacity, with most CACs using the funds to hire new staff. DOJ POP #327 ensures that this funding, as well as similar funding for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs continues at Current Service Level so that these critical staff and increased capacity can be maintained.

If these funds are not allocated, it will drastically diminish the capacity of CACs to provide essential support. These potential cuts will leave many child abuse victims without access to trauma-informed care and legal advocacy,

resulting in long-term psychological harm and a reduced ability for our justice system to protect our most vulnerable.

The effectiveness of police, prosecution, and child welfare agencies is closely tied to the support provided by Children's Advocacy Centers. These systems are interdependent, and the work of CACs is crucial in ensuring that child abuse cases are handled efficiently, effectively, and with the best interests of the child in mind. When CACs are underfunded, the strain is felt across all related systems, leading to diminished outcomes for child abuse victims and increased burdens on already stretched resources.

Children's Advocacy Centers are at a critical juncture. Without funding from the Legislature to backfill cuts to federal funding (HB 3196) and Continued Service Level of existing state dollars (DOJ POP #327), we will see reduced staffing, increased wait times, fewer children receiving critical services, and delays in child abuse investigations. I cannot overstate the urgency of the above funding requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Samantha Fenner, MS". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Samantha Fenner, MS
Clinical Manager