



April 10, 2025

Dear Co Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Jackalene Antunes, and I write on behalf of Wally's House CAC. Wally's House is the Child Advocacy Center for Curry County. We urgently request that the Legislature fund Children's Advocacy Centers at Current Service Level this biennium. All 24 Oregon Children's Advocacy Centers, including Wally's House CAC, 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 Children's Advocacy Centers:

- **HB 3196- \$18.5M to Backfill Federal Cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)**: Children's Advocacy Centers and other victims 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.**

- o 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. This cut to our funding will mean the loss of our advocate position. This is a vital role in supporting our victims and their families, providing them emotional support as well as ensuring they are referred to the appropriate services. Our advocate also ensures the victim and family begins the process to access the crime victims services and ensures their application is filed.

- **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**.

P.O. Box 1845, 94166 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Gold Beach, OR 97444 \* Phone: (541) 425-5502

*Our Mission: To provide compassionate intervention, assessment, and advocacy for victims and their families, while supporting a child-focused, community-based system of prevention and healing.*

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,

Jackalene Antunes  
Executive Director