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2685 4th Street NE • Salem, Oregon • 97301 • LibertyHouseCenter.org • P: 503-540-0288 • F: 971-917-2197

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

Liberty House urges the Legislature to provide funding for Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers at Current Service Levels this biennium. Children's Advocacy Centers receive their funding through the Crime Victims and Survivors Services Division, Oregon Department of Justice. DOJ is an outstanding partner to Oregon's CACs and we appreciate their support!

*Liberty House is the Children's Advocacy Center for Marion and Polk Counties. Annually, we serve approx. 1,000 children, Newborn to age 18. **Our essential work is comprehensive coordinated care bringing critical, lifesaving clinical and therapeutic help for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma, and grief.***

Oregon's 24 Children's Advocacy Centers, including Liberty House, are facing significant funding issues that threaten children's access to the critical services that CACs provide. Our services are mandated by ORS 418.782 yet government funding falls considerably short of providing these essential services.

Please support the following funding items which will maintain Current Service Levels for Oregon's CACs:

- **HB 3196: \$18.5 million to Backfill Federal Cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).** Children's Advocacy Centers and other victims services providers receive federal funding from VOCA. Following the close of the 2024 Legislative 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, presently in JWM, provides \$18.5 million in one-time dollars to backfill the cuts to the current grantees of the VOCA program. It also provides \$3 million for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). CACs, 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 appropriated \$6 million in funding to Oregon's CACs to increase their capacity to serve more children – which they did. DOJ POP #327 ensures that this funding will continue at Current Service Levels to maintain these critical staff levels and increased capacity.

If these funds are not allocated, it will drastically diminish the capacity of CACs to provide essential support to the children who most need it. 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 Oregon's 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.

Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers are at a critical juncture. Without funding from the Legislature to backfill cuts to federal funding (HB 3196) and Current Service Levels 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.

We would appreciate your support to maintain Current Service Level funding as proposed in HB 3196 and Oregon DOJ Budget POP 327.

Respectfully submitted,



Alison S. Kelley, JD
Chief Executive Officer