



April 25, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Supporting Current Service Level Funding for Children's Advocacy Centers

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

As executive director of CARES Northwest, Oregon's oldest and largest children's advocacy center (CAC), I write today to urgently request that the Legislature fund children's advocacy centers at Current Service Level this biennium.

CARES Northwest provides child abuse evaluation, therapy, and support services for over 1,300 children each year in Multnomah and Washington counties. We and our 23 fellow CACs are facing significant funding losses that will threaten children's access to the essential services they need to be safe and to heal.

We urgently request your support of the following funding bills, which will provide for Current Service Levels for CACs and other victim services organizations:

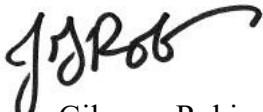
- **HB 3196 – \$18.5M to backfill federal cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding.** VOCA is the primary source of federal grants for victim service providers for child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and other crimes. Oregon was alerted that this federal funding is being reduced by 42%. Although Congress is working to pass fixes, those measures will come too late to prevent the funding cuts from going into effect this summer. These cuts will be devastating to children's advocacy centers and other victim service organizations.
 - For CARES Northwest, the cut will be approximately half a million dollars over two years, which will severely impede our ability to provide child forensic interviews and family support services to children who have suffered abuse.
 - HB 3196 provides \$18.5M in one-time dollars to backfill these cuts to current VOCA funding recipients.
- **DOJ POP #327 – Stabilizing state dollars for victim services funding.** The 2021 and 2023 Legislatures allocated \$6M to CACs to expand their capacity to serve more children. The funding was successful in growing our ability to meet demand; at CARES Northwest, we expanded our family support team, adding more social workers who are fluent in multiple languages and able to offer culturally competent support. As a result, we can provide outreach and culturally responsive support to 100 more families each year.

- For CARES Northwest, the discontinuation of this funding would result in a budget cut of approximately \$900,00 over two years, which would be a major step backward in our ability to support families during the most frightening and chaotic time of their lives.
- 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 we can maintain this critical staff and increased capacity for children and their families.

Without these funds, victims of child abuse and other crimes of violence will lose access to services that keep them safe, help them heal, and bring them justice. The loss of funding will place increased burdens on already stretched resources, resulting in reduced staffing, increased wait time, fewer children and adults receiving care, and delays in investigations and bringing offenders to justice.

I urge you to support HB 3196 and DOJ POP #327 to continue funding CACs at Current Service Level and preserve the critical safety net for victims of child abuse and other crimes. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JGRob", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jenny Gilmore-Robinson
Executive Director, CARES Northwest