

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Angela Leet, and I submit this testimony in strong support of the proposed amendment referenced in House Bill 3835A-5. I currently serve as Policy Manager in the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), and I offer my perspective not only in that role, but as a professional who has devoted the last 25 years of my career to working directly with and advocating for Oregon's children.

Throughout my career, I have delivered direct services to children, supported providers, and worked within systems designed to care for our most vulnerable. I have watched, with deep concern, as Oregon's children's behavioral health system has deteriorated—failing to meet the needs of the very population it exists to serve. The system is increasingly strained, fragmented, and under-resourced.

This amendment represents a crucial opportunity to enact the statutory changes that our children desperately need. For far too long, decision-making has been shaped by political interests and misguided narratives, rather than informed by the lived experience of providers, families, and the youth themselves. As a state, we must reject these distractions and commit to building a system rooted in what works for children and youth.

We must:

- Center our behavioral health system and broader children's system of care on the real needs of children, not institutional convenience.
- Recognize and invest in the provider workforce, which is vital to delivering consistent, high-quality care.
- Ground our reforms in the firsthand knowledge of practitioners, families, and community-based organizations.
- Build a system with stability, accountability, and compassion at its core.

I firmly believe that without concrete legislative action, Oregon's children will continue to fall through the cracks. They deserve more than stopgap measures and rhetoric—they deserve bold, informed change.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to Oregon's future. I urge your support for this amendment and look forward to partnering in building a System of Care where every child can thrive.

Sincerely,

Angela Leet
Policy Manager, ODHS
25-year Career Professional in Children's Services