

Submitter: Stephanie Alvstad
On Behalf Of: J Bar J Youth Services
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835

Testimony of Stephanie Alvstad, CEO, J Bar J Youth Services

In Support of HB 3835 – Improving Safety, Access, and Quality of Care for Oregon Children

Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazan and Pham, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Stephanie Alvstad, CEO of J Bar J Youth Services, board member of Alliance4Kids, and member of the Oregon Alliance. I strongly support HB 3835 on behalf of residential care providers dedicated to serving Oregon's most vulnerable youth.

One of our most successful programs—a residential treatment and education facility for young women—was recently forced to close, not due to lack of need or performance, but because of regulatory changes in Oregon that cut referrals by nearly 50%. This is part of a broader trend: over 40 residential programs have shut down in Oregon in the past decade due to underfunding and restrictive regulations. These regulations have created unsafe environments where staff fear intervening, putting both youth and staff at risk. For example, in one OYA program, a youth had to stop an assault on a staff member because staff were fearful of an abuse allegation due to restraint policies.

Excessive and often redundant mandatory reporting pulls clinical leaders away from supporting staff and guiding care. One provider reported that 50% of their unplanned discharges were due to regulatory misalignment, leading youth to end up in ERs, detention, or hotels—not appropriate or therapeutic settings.

This is a systemic crisis, not isolated to individual programs. HB 3835 is the solution - addressing these issues by removing harmful barriers, realigning unclear regulations, and reinvesting in trauma-informed, community-based care. This is especially urgent as services for girls, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth of color have nearly vanished.

Oregon's youth deserve safe, effective care. HB 3835 offers a necessary path forward. I urge your support to rebuild a more just and sustainable system.

Thank you.

Stephanie Alvstad,
CEO, J Bar J Youth Services