

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Edwards, Vice-Chair Javadi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erika Torralba, and I'm writing in **opposition to HB 4042** because this bill raises the point at which anyone is allowed to step in and protect a child. And when we raise that bar, all children end up paying for it.

Even with the amendment removing the “out-of-state placement” language, the heart of this bill hasn't changed. It still weakens oversight for the children who need it the most — kids with disabilities, kids with mental health needs, kids with trauma histories, kids who communicate differently. These are the children who don't always have the words to explain what's happening to them. The ones who shut down, freeze, mask, or retreat into themselves when something is wrong. The ones who rely on adults noticing the small things before they become big things.

And right now in Oregon, we are already placing children in facilities with little to no oversight — like Dynamic Life — or in hotel rooms for days, weeks, even longer, simply because the system has nowhere safe for them to go. These are not places a child should spend their childhood. These are not the memories a child should carry into adulthood. That is not safety. That is not care. That is what it looks like when a system is breaking — and HB 4042 makes that break even wider.

This bill raises the bar for when the state can monitor, investigate, or intervene. On paper, it looks like a small wording shift. But for real children, it means their distress has to look “serious enough” or “urgent enough” for someone to care. It means adults will wait longer to act. It means harm has to grow and spread before anyone is allowed to say, “This child needs help.”

By the time a situation meets this new threshold, the damage is already happening. At that point, we aren't protecting a child — we're showing up after harm is done and trying to glue together pieces that never should have been broken. And too often, the “solution” ends up being dropping that child into an adult facility because the system doesn't know what else to do with them.

Families like mine know what it feels like to raise concerns early and be ignored. We know what it feels like to watch a child suffer because someone decided the harm wasn't “bad enough” yet. Disabled children, children of color, children with trauma histories — they are already the ones people misunderstand, dismiss, or fear. Reducing oversight doesn't protect them. It leaves them even more alone.

Children in residential and treatment settings are some of the most vulnerable kids in Oregon. Many have already survived more than any child should. They don't need the bar

raised. They don't need fewer eyes watching out for them. They don't need one more bill that makes it easier for adults to miss the warning signs.

They need safety. They need intervention before the crisis, not after. They need to be kept in places made for children, not pushed into adult facilities because the system couldn't catch the harm early enough.

HB 4042 does not make them safer. It leaves them exposed.

Please oppose HB 4042.

Respectfully,
Erika Torralba