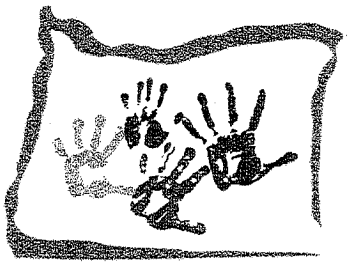

OREGON Alliance of Children's Programs

21 March 2013

House Committee on Consumer Protection and
Government Efficiency

SUPPORTING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK BILLS

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Richardson and Committee Members:

The Alliance is a statewide non-profit, supporting good budgets and good policies for children and families, and working to make children Oregon's greatest asset. We do this by representing $205 million in small businesses, and delivering services and programs for over 100,000 children.

Our members contract with multiple state and local partners, and have over 5,500 employees and 30,000 volunteers. So criminal background checks for this many individuals means the term "daunting" is not strong enough.

We want to thank Representative Nathanson for her drive, innovation, and hard work to create these cost-saving, efficient concepts that benefit the public and private sectors who are in partnership. These concepts are great examples of the kind of approaches we should be taking as a regular course of business.

The redundancy in requirements, the costs and the waiting periods, can significantly reduce our ability to recruit and hire the employees we want, the foster parents we need, and taxes even the most patient and willing of our volunteers.

The waiting period to get a background check returned and an approval from the public agency can mean prospective volunteers, staff and foster parents may not be willing to wait for the background check process, and may move on to other opportunities. This isn't good for us. But for Oregon, if unemployed individuals on benefits agree to wait for the background check process, it means they may be continuing to draw down public support for that wait time, which isn't good for Oregon.

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HB 3168, which improves the portability of criminal background checks with some common denominators for disqualifying crimes, would be an enormous improvement over the current systems. The current systems are highly individualized, making it incredibly difficult for providers to manage effectively and to make the best decisions about safe, qualified individuals for our programs.

The same is true of HB 3331, with the "clean box" approach. This could reduce staff time, paperwork, and costs for providers, as well as providing relief to the individuals who are subjected to background checks.

The paperless approach in HB 3330 is also an idea we support. We would like to see what the costs are associated with this system, as providers are often responsible for paying the background check fees. If the state could develop an efficient, cost effective system through the bill, and relieve providers of some of the current costs, it would be ideal.

We appreciate this kind of thinking that keeps children and families safe, creates cost-savings, is more efficient, and is a WIN/WIN/WIN for all parties. Please support these bills.

Thank you,
Janet D Arenz, Executive Director