



Testimony to House Committee on Consumer Protection and General Government

Supporting HB 3168 Criminal Records Checks

March 21, 2013

My name is Jan Aho. I was the Director of the Pearl Buck Preschool in Eugene, a position I held from Sept. 1994 until I was hired as Executive Director of Pearl Buck Center in February 2010. I was very pleased when Representative Nathanson visited our organization and listened to our concerns about the Criminal Records Check process AND that she followed up with a full committee to address the problem and is recommending bills like HB 3168.

All human services organizations are frustrated by the cumbersome, often confusing and sometimes costly steps needed to secure Criminal Records Checks for staff and volunteers. The problem is compounded when an individual was new to the state of Oregon. Therefore, we welcome a more streamlined, centralized system that functions better not only for the employee, but also the organization and ultimately the vulnerable population we serve.

As Pearl Buck Center serves adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and young children whose parents have cognitive limitations in the same building, employees, substitutes and volunteers have to complete two background checks. They have to complete one for the Child Care Division, and one from DD/MH system. Each department requires different paperwork. And there are many other examples of duplication, overlap, and wasted time and money with these checks across state departments and agencies.

As Representative Nathanson and her committee discovered, these systems are cumbersome, more complex than is necessary and in need of streamlining. Therefore, I join other providers in fully supporting her efforts to improve these processes. We welcome the day when there is a simplified, efficient criminal records checks system in Oregon.

That said, I understand from reviews done on these bills by the Oregon Rehabilitation Association (Our nonprofit provider association who participated on Rep Nathanson's group) and by DHS and others that there may be some amendments necessary to insure that Representative Nathanson's goals of cost and time efficiency, combined with public safety, can be adequately met. I do not have to expertise to advise on these complex bills, but I'm sure her committee can suggest appropriate amendments. Thank you again Representative Nathanson for listening and taking action on a major issue that has been a drain on our scarce resources.

Jan Aho
Executive Director