

Representative Conger,

My name is Heather Murphy and I am the Executive Director of the Family Relief Nursery serving South Lane and North Douglas counties.

I am writing to you today to express grave concerns that I have regarding House Bill 2456. In this recession, we have watched our waiting list for families at the highest risk of child abuse and neglect skyrocket! Additionally, the average numbers of risk factors (i.e., domestic violence, mental illness, homelessness, unemployment) has risen by two each of the past few years. The average in our most intensive service is a staggering 21.2 risk factors at this time. This acute level of risk for children is unprecedented in our 18-year existence.

As government and contract funding saw severe cuts to agencies, we were able to buoy our services and even open a satellite in North Douglas County with the help of large private and foundation funding. This allowed us to expand programs and mitigate our waiting list in a time when families needed them most.

My understanding of HB 2456 leads me to believe that the limits on charitable giving that it would impose, could have unintended consequences on foundations and non-profit organizations such as Relief Nurseries. We have worked very hard to diversify our funding 'pie' over the years and private donations and grants are a large part of that. The legislature has always held up the tremendous amount of private support that Relief Nurseries leverage as a great example of a true public-private partnership. A significant barrier to our private funding would certainly affect our ability to raise those kinds of dollars and continue to meet the growing demands of at-risk families.

I have recently fielded questions about this bill from donors, volunteers and board members here and as a result, spent some time doing research. I found that other states have adopted similar bills and some are already being revisited as a result of huge blows to their charitable giving and the adverse affects that it is having on social services, higher education and other sectors that rely heavily on such funding.

I know that you have been a great supporter of programs such as ours. I would very much appreciate your careful consideration of the potential consequences of HB 2456. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Heather Murphy

Heather Murphy
Executive Director
Family Relief Nursery

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