



"Support for new beginnings and healthy families."

4/9/2013

Dear Chair Greenlick, Vice Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Thompson, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2020. As a small lean non-profit mental health provider serving the most vulnerable children within the state child welfare system for over 16 years, HB 2020 has the possibility to provide needed efficiency and streamlining. An action that moves towards reducing redundancy and cost in administration, supports more time and energy to be applied to the mission of the children we serve. Multiple redundant audits can bare a significant burden on small lean providers such as Kinship House, as we strive to provide optimal access with 15 staff, for over 400 children a year.

Kinship House was founded in 1996 by mental health and child welfare professionals, aware of the barriers facing foster children awaiting adoptive placement or adjusting to foster care, adoption or guardianship. Today we hold to our mission offering a unique program for children and families in transition from crisis to a successful, permanent adoption or reunification. This transition is neither easy nor simple. Kinship House emphasizes the importance of each child's culturally unique and diverse kinship bonds. Each case focuses work with a foster child in need, as well as with foster parents, foster siblings, birth siblings and birth relatives. Every child's case opens an expanding circle of relationships and complex interactions that without support can be confusing and stressful. A typical Kinship House foster case may involve a primary foster child, two birth siblings, one birth parent, two foster siblings, two foster parents, two adoptive parents and two adoptive siblings touching 11 family members.

We have one outpatient service site located in inner NE Portland, we also have therapists stationed at two local partner sites within North and South East Portland. The majority of children and families seen for ongoing outpatient therapy live within Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas County, we have approval for billing from all three counties. A smaller percent of our outpatient families come from Marion and even as far as Hood River.

Kinship House is also one of the few providers in the state that perform Child Welfare specific assessment's that assist informing the court permanency process helping ensure smooth successful transitions to permanency. We provided these services to children across the state including Kalamath Falls, Bend, Coos County, and many rural communities.

An average credentialing and the bi-annual audits take numerous hours of staff time & within in small agency multiple process are an intense burden. It could easily be said that 200 hours, about a month of a staff hours, divided amongst 3-4 staff are required for each episode. Typically it requires the most expensive staff with a strong knowledge base and appropriate level of responsibility to address the process. We could roughly estimate each episode requires \$6-9,000 for a small agency with a \$740,000.00 annual budget this takes time and funding away from serving our kids. Please support this simple, common sense approach to saving time and money for both the CCO's and the providers.

Thank you and best regards,
Heather Jefferis, Executive Director Kinship House