

Chair Tomei and members of the Committee:

Good afternoon and thank-you for opportunity to testify in favor of HB2392 and the clarifying amendments proposed by Rep. Clem. My name is Hillary Saraceno and I'm here on behalf of youth in CO region.

1. HB2392 includes some important language that provides a framework to protect and improve services for youth across OR, not just to those involved in gangs.
 - a. **Some would say:** bill is an effort to maintain the status quo.
 - b. **Agree 100%:** if funds not used effectively or achieving targeted outcomes.
 - c. **CAUTION:** Not asking 4 status quo, but caution@ unintended consequences:
 - i. At risk of sounding trite, *don't throw the baby out with the bath water....rob Peter to pay Paul...or rob non-gang youth for gang youth*
 - ii. HB2392 moves us forward cautiously to minimize the negative impact loss of funding will have for communities across the state.
2. In CO **we do not have gangs**, but we **have youth at-risk** due to variety of factors.
3. **The youth investment funds** (which are the funds at stake here) **make a big difference** in our communities and play a significant **role in helping to achieve the Governor's 40-40-20 educational goals and outcomes.**
4. BUT **wouldn't qualify under the current prioritizing language of gang violence**
5. Two main programs funded with YI **were prioritized by community to fill a gap** in services prioritized by our county
 - a. **The Loft (handout)** – only homeless shelter for youth in CO.
 - i. Quick Facts
 1. YI = ave. of 186+/year (of >2000 served)
 2. Ave. age is 15 yrs; 53% female, 46% male
 3. 80% of youth report suffering abuse by an adult
 4. Article: Nick's story and an overview of the Loft
 5. Letters: Cynthia and Jessica
 - ii. Services
 1. Not all housing and shelter (MH/A&D screen/Rx, ed re-eng.)
 2. Bringing needed wrap around services to youth
 3. Prioritize funds 4 underserved communities – w/no resources
 - iii. Outcomes – investments driving toward the Gov.'s ed. Goals:
 1. **86% of the 186** youth served by CYFC (w/YI funds) **re-engage** in school and improve academic progress (GED, diploma, etc).

2. **96% of youth re-connected w/ family or secured a stable and safe living situation in which to transition before leaving the shelter.**
3. Large % would not grad, end up on street... Improving their chances of a successful transition to adulthood (2012 data).

b. FFT – see handout

i. Outcomes –

1. Large % having challenges with school:
 - a. poor grades, poor attendance, lack of connection w/school, diagnosed learning disability/IEP
 2. **100% of youth who had school-related criminogenic risks**
 3. **95% of those youth were enrolled and re-engaged** in school and making academic progress at time of FFT termination
6. **Criticism #2:** Keeping Co. involved is maintaining an ineffective bureaucracy... and funds would not go to serve youth....In DC, worth noting:
 - a. 100% of YI funds go to serve youth “on the ground”
 - b. Co. takes NO ADMIN fee...AND...
 - c. Getting results leading to achieving Gov’s 40-40-20 goals (above examples)
7. **CFC may be gone** as of June 30, 2013 *but our at-risk youth will not be gone.*
8. **The resources may be limited,** which is being used as an excuse to not have an equitable funding formula...
 - a. **Need to ask ourselves:** What problems will be created by shifting resources to predominantly to addressing gang violence?
 - b. Des. Co. and the tax payers who live in Central Oregon expect there will be **an equitable distribution formula for youth investment and JCP funds.**
9. **On behalf of DC, as well as the Nick’s, Cynthias’s and Jessica’s of the world,** we ask you to support HB2392 with the clarifying amendments.
10. **HB2392 will expand prioritization** of funding to be more inclusive by adding
 - a. *prevention & intervention of criminogenic factors that* (according to extensive research) **lead to reductions in juvenile delinquency and poor academic outcomes AS WELL AS gang violence** and the
 - b. *services proven to be successful in achieving the Gov.’s education goals* that will be drastically cut or eliminated if the YI funds are directed elsewhere

Nonprofit Spotlight



Photos by Christopher L. Ingersoll

by Kathy Oxborrow, for *The Bulletin Special Projects*

It was a cold winter afternoon when a LOFT (Living Options for Teens) employee saw a young man standing by himself near Lava Lanes in Bend. The employee stopped and asked the youth if he needed help. Turns out the teen, who was 16 at the time, needed a lot of help.

"What we found out was that this young man's mom had come to Bend seeking psychiatric services" remembered Pat Gundy, program manager at The LOFT. "She ended up being hospitalized for pervasive mental illness, so we had a

16-year-old kid here who had nothing."

The LOFT, a program of J Bar J Youth Services, is the only homeless shelter for youths in Central Oregon. It has the capacity to serve 12 male and female youth ages 16 to 20.

During an assessment, the staff learned that the young man, Nick, hadn't been to school regularly for a number of years and had some special needs, but wanted to complete his high school education.

While he lived at The LOFT, he attended school and graduated from Summit High School after which he entered the Job Corps program in Troutdale. There



Program manager Pat Gundy

he completed a culinary program and, at 19, is now seeking his first job.

Nick's story is just one of the many success stories at The LOFT, which partners with other social service agencies and law enforcement agencies to keep the growing

number of homeless and runaway youths safe.

Young runaway and homeless girls and boys are the most vulnerable to those seeking to profit from sexual exploitation. We would all like to think the sex trade industry doesn't exist in Central Oregon, but it does.

"A young person who runs away from home is likely to be contacted by someone with bad intentions within the first 24 to 48 hours of being on the street," said Gundy.

That's why a program like The LOFT is so important to provide caring adult support and supervision. Youths can live at The LOFT for 21 months, but they have to follow the rules.

Gundy said the staff is



to put 75 percent of their income into a trust account for them to use when they transition out of The LOFT. Eight of the 12 youth presently living at The LOFT have "self investment" accounts.

The youths reside at The LOFT voluntarily.

"A parent can't put a kid here. The kid has to want to be here. If they want to run we just say, 'Can you talk to me for five seconds? I just want to make sure you have some place safe to go tonight. I'd love it if you'd call me next week and tell me you're okay,'" said Mel Parker the operations manager at The LOFT.

The situations of the teens who end up at The LOFT vary widely, but the common factor is that they are living in an environment in which they are not getting their basic needs met.

If you would like more information about The LOFT or want to donate call 541-318-3436.

strict with the kids and provides a lot of structure that they are not used to. There is a curfew, drug testing, a requirement to volunteer in the community and either attend school or seek employment. The youth also receive intensive individualized services based on their needs.

Youth with jobs are required

Last year, The LOFT:

- Provided 4,089 nights of emergency shelter
- Received 6,593 hotline calls from youths and their families
- Sheltered 27 youths

Troubled youths

- Average age of a runaway is 15
- 53 percent are female, 46 percent are male, one percent are transgendered
- 63 percent of runaway and homeless youth are never reported missing or sought after by their parents or guardians
- 12-17 year olds are at more risk of homelessness than adults
- One in eight youth under the age of 18 become homeless and in need of services
- 80 percent of youth report suffering abuse at the hands of an adult

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Cascade Youth and Family Center provided a safe and encouraging environment to myself as well as the teens and young adults who lived with me. The staff helped me get through high school a year early, set me up with any resources I would need to get to college or the trade school of my choice, and consistently worked with me to make my goals accessible and realistic. CYFC helped me learn to budget, be fully responsible for all my actions, and how to successfully structure my days and weeks around hobbies, friends, school work. They also worked extensively with me on my alcohol/drug addiction instead of letting me fall to the wayside as a lost cause but were never unrealistic with me about my goals to stop using. I'm now equipped with the skills to talk to and work with a diverse range of people, how to properly process an emotional response to something, communicate with my family, be fully independent out of high school, and to stop and think about myself once in a while.

CYFC has been more supportive of my decisions than my family has been [until they come around] and I feel without Mel, Pat, and everyone else, my quality of life would be lower than it is now. The strong support system that is in place made me feel comfortable enough to express myself and my dreams. The people at the LOFT never doubted me, which means more than anything I learned throughout my stay. To have been able to have a mentor as well as any other resource I could have wanted [Seriously: food, mental health specialists, substance abuse specialists, in-house groups, outside activities] at the drop of a hat. Not to mention there's always a staff member around should you need them. I'm extremely blessed to have been able to be a part of such a wonderful outreach to struggling teens in the community.

Sincerely,

Cynthia





August 28, 2012

Mr. Gundy

I honestly don't even know where to begin. You and the staff at the LOFT have truly impacted my life in such a positive way over the past few years. Living at the LOFT Program was an incredibly humbling and yet amazing experience for me. Meeting such caring people there made it a time of positive maturation for me. While I did not face gang violence or the hard streets of a big city, I did face daily instability and a lack of positive adults in my life. Thank you for being such a positive and reliable person for me and for being there for all the other kids that need help. I am headed off to college now, and I plan on staying in contact with you in the future. Please send my love and thanks to all the staff of the LOFT, and to the residents there. Please come to Fort Collins to visit when you can.

Love always,

Jessica



Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

March 2013 Newsletter

Crime Prevention Funding At-Risk

FFT is in jeopardy of losing all funds dedicated specifically to youth who have not yet offended, but are demonstrating behavior indicative of future crime.

Last year, these funds supported **23 youth/families**, demonstrating on average **seven (7) criminogenic risk factors**. Referrals came from school counselors, FAN advocates, Behavioral Health, DHS and some self-referrals. **81%** of youth who completed did not have a criminal referral within 6 months. Overall, these youth and their families are extremely high risk, falling through social service and prevention nets, and without other behavioral, emotional or family support.

We would not be able to provide any services to this profile of youth if "Youth Investment Funding" is eliminated. Other funding streams are targeted at juvenile offenders only.

What Clients Say...



FFT can work where other treatment has failed:

"Marcus [FFT therapist] is very flexible...He switched our family sessions to morning when afternoons became full. He has always been available to help when we needed him. Joe (not his real name) will always have communication barriers due to his Asperger's diagnosis [but] Marcus has given invaluable tools to

assist Ben with how to keep from lashing out physically in the home and school." - Mother.

FFT keeps engaging families with child behaviors that would exclude them from other services:

"We have had many different agencies working with us the past 11 years and NEVER has anyone ever called my family out on any behavior issues before...Amy [FFT therapist] will get right in with what's going on when she gets here" - Mother

FFT gets at the root of problems

"The real personalities come out in a home family setting. That was a new and different experience. It was so awesome that we were able to continue through the family transition...it gave us some time to refocus and find a balance" - Grandmother

FFT provides long-lasting thinking and behavioral changes:

"I really enjoy seeing the changes communication and conflict resolution within my family. Amy [FFT therapist] has done a great job of making us all comfortable discussing uncomfortable situations."-Mother.

Questions? Please call Jim LaPorte, Supervisor at 541-322-7652

