

February 27, 2013

TO: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

FROM: Jennifer Gilmore-Robinson
Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers

RE: House Bill 5018

Co-Chair Winters, Co-Chair Williamson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Gilmore-Robinson. I am the director of ABC House, one of the twenty child abuse intervention centers in Oregon.

Last year, ABC House provided child abuse assessment services to 661 children from Benton and Linn Counties. Every single one of those children was helped because of Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) funds.

One of those children was Cara*. She was nine years old when the sexual abuse started. A twenty-year-old babysitter dressed Cara in women's lingerie and photographed her. And then he molested her. He threatened that if she ever told anyone, he would kill everyone she loved: her parents, her little brother, even her dog.

For almost a year Cara stayed silent, enduring the unimaginable in the desperate hope that it would keep her loved ones safe. One afternoon, while cleaning Cara's room, her mother found the letters he had been writing to Cara. Cara's mother called the police and the police brought Cara and her family to ABC House. There, during a child abuse assessment by adults with the skills to help, Cara began to open up little by little.

She was met at the door of ABC House by a smiling advocate, who welcomed her into the playroom where she could get comfortable and begin to feel at ease. Her appointment started with a head-to-toe medical exam in the Fish Room, where she chose music to listen to and the pattern of medical gown she wanted to wear. At first Cara shared only a little bit about what happened to her, testing to see if the doctor who examined her would react with horror when Cara explained the things he had done to her. When no judgment came, she shared a few more details. Then Cara sat down with an interviewer who gently asked more questions and the floodgates opened. Cara was finally able to hand over the burden she had been carrying alone for almost a year.

The police detective observed the interview from the monitoring room and was able to use Cara's statements and the results of her medical exam to arrest her perpetrator, and it is my understanding that he will be prosecuted. Cara and her parents were connected to counseling to help them start on the path toward healing.

Cara was one of 661 children served by ABC House in 2012, a nine percent increase over the previous year. 58 percent of those children were girls and 42 percent were boys. More than half of these children were under the age of seven.

CAMI funds are critical to our ability to meet the needs of children like Cara. They represent one-fifth of ABC House's budget. CAMI helps make it possible for us to provide physicians specializing in child abuse medicine, forensic interviewers trained in talking to children in an age-appropriate and non-leading manner, and counselors and advocates skilled in supporting families impacted by trauma – all in one safe, child-friendly environment. Child abuse intervention centers are places where abuse professionals from medical, mental

**Name changed to protect client privacy.*

health, law enforcement and child protective services work together to meet the child's needs. Every one of these professional is committed to the same vision: that the system created to protect children who disclose abuse must not further victimize them.

CAMI funds help make this vision a reality. We ask that you support the proposed increase in CAMI funds and invest in child abuse intervention centers like ABC House.

Thank you for your consideration of what is best for Oregon children. We would be happy to provide any additional information to assist in this process.

Lobbyist: Lana Butterfield, 503-819-5800