

House Committee on Health Care
HB2234
February 6, 2015

Submitted by Kevin Dowling, Program Manager, CARES Northwest

Dear Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2234 and services dedicated to child abuse victims across Oregon.

My name is Kevin Dowling and I work as the Manager at CARES Northwest in Portland, Oregon. I am also the current Chair of the Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers.

CARES Northwest is one of the oldest and largest child abuse intervention centers in the country. Last year we provided medical care to more than 1,500 suspected child abuse victims in our outpatient clinic (not including children served in the emergency department, or those admitted to the hospital).

Sadly, child abuse is pervasive. In Oregon, over the past 10 years, an average of 63,000 child abuse reports were made to DHS annually, with about 11,000 victims each year. Child abuse is not something that happens to “other children in other kinds of families”. Child abuse cuts across all social, economic, and cultural boundaries. Each one of us knows an adult who has survived abuse, and each one of us knows a child at risk. It is impossible not to.

People quickly appreciate how harmful abuse is to a child. There is a growing understanding, however, of how traumatic childhood events can lead to significant health problems throughout one’s life. For example, the *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study* (www.acestudy.org), by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, highlights how trauma in childhood is common, and associated with some of the leading causes of illness and early death in society (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/findings.html). Further, *An Assessment of the Economic Cost of Child Maltreatment* released by the Perryman Group in November 2014 estimated the lifetime impact of all social costs and lost earnings associated with one year of non-fatal and fatal child maltreatment to be \$57 billion dollars in Oregon alone (www.perrymangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/Perryman_Child_Maltreatment_Report.pdf).

CARES Northwest and Oregon’s 20 other Child Abuse Intervention Centers are committed to serving all children suspected of being abused, regardless of their ability to pay. We believe that a coordinated, caring response by experts is the best way to intervene and minimize the impact of the trauma – on the child, on the adult that child will become, and on all of us.

HB 2234 will help support the work of centers by fixing a reimbursement system for child abuse assessments that is currently out of whack. Funding a coordinated, effective response to child abuse isn’t just the right thing to do from a moral and public safety perspective, it’s a wise business investment.

I urge you to support HB 2234 -- because child abuse impacts all of us, and all of us have a role to play in stopping it.

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