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March 27, 2015

Sen. Chip Shields, Co-Chair
Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Co-Chair
Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Public Safety
Oregon Legislative Assembly
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Sen. Shields, Rep. Williamson, and Members of the Subcommittee on Public Safety:

Please accept this letter of support for SB 5516, which includes continued funding for the Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) Account. The CAMI grants provide critical funding for the statutorily required multidisciplinary response to reports of child abuse in Oregon.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Liberty House, the Child Abuse Assessment Center serving Marion County and one of two serving Polk County, I can tell you that these funds are critical for carrying out the requirements of ORS 418.747 (County Teams for Investigation) and ORS 419B.022-024 (Karly's Law). Responding effectively to reports of child abuse requires professionals with highly specialized training to work together. The coordination means the process of telling and getting help is much better for children and their families. Fewer appointments and more integrated case planning get better results.

Members of the Marion County multidisciplinary team, which we call the Child Abuse Response Team (CART) (which includes the District Attorney, law enforcement professionals, and Department of Human Services Professionals, child welfare, and others) report being inundated with child abuse and child sex abuse cases. I have noticed a similar heavy load in Polk County. The CAMI funds are critical for us here at Liberty House to assist both these counties in responding effectively. The cases we have seen here have recently been tragic and alarming. Of the over 8,500 calls to the DHS Hotline in Marion and Polk Counties each year, over 1,100 are confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect. At Liberty House we saw 406 children in 2014 and are gearing up to increase that number by 50%. The CAMI grant will be a critical component of our ability to serve the children who need to be seen.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Respectfully submitted,


Alison S. Kelley