

March 26, 2015

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

RE: SB5516

Dear Representative Williamson and Senator Shields, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Public Safety:

I am writing in support of SB5516, which includes continued funding for the Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Intervention (CAMI) Account Grants. The CAMI grants provide critical funding for the statutorily required multidisciplinary response to reports of child abuse in Oregon.

As the executive director of Children's Center, the child abuse intervention center serving Clackamas County, I can attest to the impact of these grants not only for Children's Center, but for the entire multidisciplinary team. The funds provide essential support for training MDT members and for coordinating the broad spectrum of partners who are involved in addressing and investigating child abuse cases.

Sadly, child abuse is a prevalent problem that impacts every community in Oregon with more than 60,000 reports made annually across the state and about 11,000 confirmed victims each year. The multidisciplinary response model, bolstered by CAMI grants, allows law enforcement, child protective workers, district attorney offices and child abuse intervention centers to work collaboratively, following evidence-based practices, which are proven to benefit the children and to build efficiencies for the partner agencies.

In Clackamas County, the majority of the CAMI grant is directed to Children's Center, allowing us to provide more than 400 medical assessments each year, to consult with hundreds of families who either need help deciphering behavior changes in their children or need help in the aftermath of abuse, and to consult with medical and other providers who encounter concerns of abuse but are not experts. In addition the grant funds the county's Response to Inappropriately Sexualized Kids (RISK) outreach where we intervene in cases of inappropriate behaviors among children who are 12-years or younger so that they can be helped before their actions have more detrimental damage and place them in the juvenile justice system. The grant also allows our MDT partners to attend invaluable trainings in Oregon and

beyond and to bring experts to speak to the full MDT so that all partners are current on best-practices and current research. Finally, the Regional Service Provider grants funded through CAMI allow child abuse intervention centers to access local training, peer-review opportunities and consulting, which are required to maintain national accreditation and preserve high-quality services. We could not as a system function without these grants.

The level of CAMI grant funding has wavered over the years after reaching a stable level during the 2007 Legislative session. The uncertainty resulted in many children not receiving services, especially after passage of Oregon's Karly Law that created a specific protocol for responding to cases of physical abuse and increased the demand for our services. The funding was restored to 2009 levels during the last Legislative session, which provided more stability to the multidisciplinary response. We are supportive of SB5516, which continues the current level of funding. Yes, there are counties where this level of funding will not guarantee that staffing will be in place to serve every child, but we are grateful for this stability.

I am happy to provide additional information and to answer questions, and can be reached at barbara@childrenscenter.cc or by calling 503-655-7725.

Thank you for your consideration of this important funding that will improve the lives and success of thousands of children across the state.

Sincerely,



Barbara C. Peschiera
Executive Director
Children's Center