

February 3, 2016
TESTIMONY
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs
**COMMITTED TO SAFETY –
the FIRST STEP TO WELL-BEING & RECOVERY**



The Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs supports SB 1515

We continue to be aligned with Chair Gelser in her commitment to develop assurances that child safety has a priority position in human services work.

Our goal is to support the reform steps represented in the bill, which do provide greater assurances for child safety; and also to provide some perspectives on elements which will create a balance to ensure a quality system of programs, services, and foster care exist for the children who need them.

SB 1515 focuses on identifying and eliminating programs and services that don't meet minimum standards. That's necessary.

But focusing on identifying failing programs isn't enough. We should not wait for providers to fail or quit – children will fail too.

We have three concepts from the Alliance we are putting forward to bring another piece into the goal for child safety and for success. Two of the concepts are represented as amendments to the bill. The amendments do not immediately implement the concepts, but get us headed towards continuous improvement.

QUANTITY *and* QUALITY – ENSURE A BALANCED APPROACH

In order to focus on the regulatory side, it naturally becomes a quantitative approach – increasing requirements, increasing investigations, increasing documentation that certain events have occurred.

The -2 and -3 amendments focus on “qualitative” pieces -- investing in continuous improvement to secure and sustain “quality” capacity, programs, staff and foster parents.

- Support the “Center for Continuous Improvement” concept to make sure providers and foster parents have data, evidence, information and training to ramp up child safety. We must invest in success, not focus on identifying failure.
- Require the DHS to achieve national accreditation in child welfare. National accrediting organizations are leaders in best practices, strategies from other states, safety, outcomes and quality. They will evaluate every aspect of Oregon's child welfare operations and practices.

USE TARGETED OUTCOMES and DATA TO MEASURE SUCCESS

How will we know if we are improving safety records without identifying targeted outcomes we want to achieve? What is the impact of the new regulations and statutes? What strategies work? Are they moving the dial on child safety?

- The Alliance requested an amendment that identification of targeted outcomes, measuring impacts, data and evaluation for what is and isn't working to improve child safety.
- Regulations must have identified targets for expected improvement and impact. We must be data-driven to know what is and isn't working.
 - Counting outputs won't measure quality, only quantity. Outcome targets, measuring impact, and data, tell the real story.
 - Reform is accountability, tools, incentivized systems and proven outcomes. Reform is not a bigger hammer.
- We have agreed to work with Senator Gelser on development of measurements and outcomes.

QUALITY CAPACITY = SAFETY

In 2017, state agencies will be asking for resources to support a provider rate increase. We will need this resourcing to stop the loss of capacity.

- We must have safe places and treatment for children who can't be at home. But we are losing significant capacity to help them, even before increasing current regulations.
 - 41% of foster care capacity is *currently* empty because of no foster parents.
 - 12 programs have been returned to the State in the last several months.Why?
 - Losing too much money – not sustainable.
 - Weight of risk and regulatory oversight.
- Fund implementation, not just regulation.
 - Providers need resources to build improvements, provide training and run evidence-based programs.
 - Improve rates so providers can pay minimum wage and compete in the workplace.
 - Providers are receiving 30% less in rates than required to cover costs [Dec 2015].
 - Fund the development of a provider-driven center focused on meeting high safety standards and high quality programs.
 - The Center for Continuous Improvement

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS:

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