



OREGON
Alliance
of Children's Programs

HB 4080
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee
22 February 2016

Establishing a Governors Foster Care Commission SUPPORT

Our thanks to Representative Duane Stark for bringing this important process and opportunity for improvement to Oregon's foster care system.

The Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs represents \$235 million in services for children and families, many of whom have touched the foster care system. We also represent approximately 200 foster parents through our member organizations.

Representative Stark, with his history of foster parenting and his earlier work in a license organization who also provides therapeutic foster care, is a perfect person with the right perspective and experience to bring this concept to the legislature. He has an insiders perspective on the challenges and successes.

Oregon's foster care system is struggling, as we all know. So are the children in that system.

The Alliance conducted a study of Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) in 2014, which included children in Oregon's therapeutic foster care system. This is a study conducted by Kaiser Permanente and the Center for Disease Control, which looked at 10 traumatic events for children under 18 years old. Events include abuse, neglect, parent in prison, hunger, addiction or death in the home, etc. A "score" of 4 or more of these experiences catapults children into a high risk category because of the trauma associated with the events. Those high risks include not finishing high school, significant social and physical ills, including chronically ill adulthood and early death.

According to our study, children in therapeutic foster care have the highest percentage of children in any other type of care for scores of 4 or more (84%).

Thirty-two percent of the children have scores of 8 or 9. The mode (the most commonly repeated number of experiences) is 7.

There are currently many entities that are working directly on these issues and also on subsets of contributing factors to the challenges

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in foster care systems. The commission is an opportunity for all of these entities to submit their work into a central location for a comprehensive look at elements of the system, areas needing improvement, and good strategic recommendations.

The commission will be able to help resolve our current problems, and even equally important -- to take a long-term look at what we need to be doing for these children and their families in the future.

This is a great concept for a high-profile commission under the governor's own hand, which will be a permanent representation of Oregon's commitment to these children. We are very appreciative to the governor for her current work looking at substitute care, and her forward commitment to a new commission.

Thank you,
Janet Arenz, Executive Director