



# Children First for Oregon

*Speaking Up for Kids Since 1991*

February 23, 2017

Senator Jackie Winters, Co-Chair  
Representative Duane Stark, Co-Chair  
Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Winters and Stark, Members of the Subcommittee,

Children First for Oregon is the primary research source for child wellbeing data in Oregon. It is in that context that we stand in support of the Oregon Youth Authority and its budget requests.

In our 2016 report funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Children First assessed a decade of data from the Oregon Youth Authority and the Oregon Department of Corrections on juveniles in the criminal justice system in Oregon. Nearly 1,500 youth are the responsibility of OYA; over half are maintained in the community, while the remaining youth are held in close custody. We studied the evidence-based treatment options, education and training provided by OYA that are designed to prevent these youth from re-offending. Our research concluded that the rehabilitative power of the Oregon Youth Authority's individual approach is good for both youth offenders and the community.

A one-size-fits-all approach does not serve youth well. Each individual must be evaluated to ensure the correct placement that optimizes outcomes that protect society and rehabilitate the youth. The individualized approach is also the best approach for youth with addiction or mental health needs. OYA's Youth Reformation System modelling tool uses JJIS data to create better outcomes. The developmental approach to juvenile justice is implemented in Oregon through the use of the Positive Human Development practice. Our analysis used statistical matching techniques to compare youth (16-18) with adults (18-20), excluding Measure 11 offenses, and concluded that youth held in juvenile facilities were less likely to recidivate and less likely to have more serious subsequent offenses than the adults only a few years older sentenced to adult facilities. These programs work.

We understand that there is room for improvement in juvenile justice and that requires an investment from the Legislature. The Oregon Youth Authority has taken strong first steps to execute their mission using an individualized approach to programming and placements. We hope you will continue the investments in OYA that have proven to work.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cushwa  
Strategic Director