



COALITION OF ADVOCATES
FOR EQUAL ACCESS
FOR GIRLS

February 22, 2017

Testimony to the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means

Re: Governor's 2017-19 Budget Add Back: OYA's Young Women's Transition Program

Co-Chair Senator Jackie Winters, Co-Chair Representative Duane Stark and members of the Committee, my name is Pam Patton, I was President of the Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls for 20 years and currently the State and National Liaison. The Coalition is a statewide all volunteer, non-profit organization with a mission to ensure that the state's 1993 Equal Access Law (ORS 417.270) is implemented and that girls and young women who are involved with the State system, as the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA), receive equity in access to the gender-specific services they need to develop to their full potential. **I am here today in support of the section of the Governor's "add back" packages to the OYA's Budget that will fund the Young Women's Transition Program** in Albany.

I have been an active member of OYA's Advisory Committee and past OYA Young Women's Workgroups for 20 years. During the late 90's the Coalition worked in collaboration with OYA to open in March, 1999 OYA's only Young Women's Transition Program (YWTP), the Corvallis House. In February 2008, after 4 years of the Coalition again working in collaboration with OYA the Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility for young women was opened. The Corvallis House facility in Albany in need of extensive renovations ended up being closed in 2009. A new transition facility was built outside of Oak Creek, however from 2009 to November 2015, the YWTP remained empty. So the YWTP needed to be operated within the walls of the Oak Creek facility with few dedicated staff.

The Young Women's Transition Program is designed for young women to provide them with educational, vocational, career-oriented, and other programs to help young women transition successfully back into the community and respond to difficult situations in a healthy way.

YWTP was opened on a pilot basis in 2015, **and the Governor's Budget proposes funding to make it permanent.** Funding this program helps address the Secretary of State recommendation in their 2016 Audit **that OYA work with the Legislature to seek ongoing funding to operate the Young Women's Transition Program beyond the pilot period and ensure adequate community services for female youth.** The Secretary of State audit noted that transition services for female youth in OYA's custody falls short to those available to males, who have 3 transition programs. **Young women** in Oregon Youth Authority custody **need this program and do not have equitable transition services.**

The Coalition would strongly encourage the Public Safety Subcommittee **to make permanent the funding for OYA's Young Women's Transition Program.** Thank you for your consideration.

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