

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

To: House Committee on Judiciary, 2017 Oregon Legislative Assembly

From: Mark McKechnie, MSW, Youth, Rights & Justice

Date: March 14, 2017

RE: Support for HB 2345 – Recommendations of the Oregon Governor’s Task Force on Legal Representation in Childhood Dependency

Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

Youth, Rights & Justice supports the recommendations of the Task Force on Legal Representation in Childhood Dependency and the statutory changes included in HB 2345. These changes will improve outcomes for children and their families involved in Oregon’s child dependency system.

On any given day, Youth, Rights & Justice attorneys represent children and parents in over 600 pending juvenile dependency matters, plus 50 or more termination of parental rights cases. This is in addition to their representation in other juvenile cases, including appeals of juvenile matters, juvenile felonies and misdemeanors, and Juvenile Psychiatric Security Review Board cases. YRJ has been doing much of this work for 42 years, and our average attorney tenure is 11 years working at YRJ on juvenile cases.

The attachment included highlights the improved outcomes that can be achieved for children and their families when attorney caseloads are reduced and legal representation is improved.

YRJ urges your support of HB 2345 in order to improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child dependency system throughout Oregon.