



ALBERTINA
KERR

March 21, 2017

Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee
on Human Services

Reference: SB5526

Dear Co-chairs Senator Steiner-Hayward and Representative Rayfield, and
Committee members,

My name is Jeff Carr, and I am the new Chief Executive Officer of Albertina Kerr Centers, a 110 year old Oregon non-profit organization serving children and adults with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities. Our organization and the people we serve and employ are constituents in many of your committee members' districts.

Albertina Kerr is led by a 20-member Board of Directors made up of business leaders, family members of the people we serve, and community volunteers. We want to thank you for supporting your constituents -- your providers, the children and adults with disabilities and mental health challenges who live in your community, as well as their hard working families.

Our mission is to keep the people we serve safe when they are with us and to help them realize their full potential. Our services include outpatient community-based mental health services, short-term inpatient crisis psychiatric care, and group homes for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

- **Community-Based Mental Health Services:** Last year Albertina Kerr went into the community to serve 503 children with wraparound care coordination, individual and family therapy, skills training, and behavioral support.
- **Crisis Psychiatric Care:** Last year Albertina Kerr served 297 children experiencing a mental health emergency. 80% of the children we served left our care able to return to their home. Only 2% of the children served required a more intensive level of care at discharge.
- **Youth Group Homes for Children with Developmental Disabilities:** Last year 96 children received care in 18 group homes, which is 60% of all the kids in the state of Oregon who need this level of care. Our goal is for the youth to develop the skills they need to be as independent as possible as adults. In sum, the kids in care accomplished 81% of the goals they set for themselves in their Individual Support Plans.

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One of the children in our care this past year was Walsh, who was facing the challenges of social anxiety, OCD, and Tourette's syndrome. At 12 years old, Walsh threatened suicide, telling his parents that he didn't want to be around anymore. His parents, Julia and Rick, were also becoming fearful that Walsh could be a danger to his younger brother, Henry. After the suicide threat, Julia and Rick took Walsh to the emergency room where he was connected to our Crisis Psychiatric Care program.

Initially Walsh dug in his heels and was fearful of needing and receiving help, and it was a significant change for him to be in the short-term residential facility. But his time in care with Kerr helped Walsh identify his strengths and implement a plan for going home safely. Walsh's counselor, Ryan, was in touch with Julia and Rick often throughout Walsh's stay to let them know about Walsh's progress. The routine check-ins from staff were a relief to Julia and Rick. With each note of progress, the family was becoming less concerned for the safety of Henry when Walsh returned.

When Walsh's stay reached three weeks, a point at which most children are ready to return home, Julia, Rick and Ryan discussed the prospect and decided more time was needed. Rather than move Walsh to long-term residential care, which can keep children away from home for three to six months, our Crisis Psychiatric Care program continued care for longer than most. After 38 days Walsh returned home. He had learned how to problem solve, to think before reacting, and how to implement new self-soothing skills.

His progress continues with the help of Albertina Kerr's community-based mental health services. Today, Walsh receives visits for support at his home from our skills trainers and counselors. Julia and Rick are continuing their own progress, taking advantage of free Collaborative Problem Solving classes that we offer for parents. Walsh, like the rest of the children we serve, has come so far.

We can't stop helping these children now and as you well know, proposed changes to the state funding system threaten to make services like these even more scarce for kids with disabilities and mental health challenges and their hardworking families. Please prioritize vulnerable kids and families in this budget session and help us continue to provide these supports to the people in your district.

Sincerely,



Jeff Carr

Chief Executive Officer

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