



April 3, 2017

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chair Olson, Vice-Chair Sanchez & Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Homestead Board Members, dedicated staff and the young Oregonians we serve.

I have been with Homestead for 20 years and now serve as the Executive Director. Often, we have youth placed here that have extensive trauma histories, academic failure, family instability, learning challenges and mental health issues. They have become deeply involved with various systems in their young lives. In our Behavioral Rehabilitation Services programs, we offer treatment in a residential setting and foster homes for these youngsters to have a safe and structured place to begin to build their lives toward a successful future.

Our mission is to provide targeted, effective services that launch these young Oregonians toward becoming productive, healthy members of our state's communities. We are often able to see this come to fruition. Just last week, a young man stopped in to introduce me to his wife and new baby. He'd been a client here when he was 17 and was able to finish high school, address his mental health issues and trauma history and complete substance abuse treatment with BRS services. He shared details of his full time employment, college courses and successful parenting.

Since last year's regulatory changes, we have been forced to dedicate an increasing number of hours to managing redundant administrative details and paperwork. The climate of collaboration and partnership between state agencies and private child caring agencies, such as ours, has shifted dramatically and we now find a far more adversarial and suspicious tone to our interactions even though we are all working toward the very same goal of caring for these children. SB1515 has resulted in, literally, hours and hours of time reporting to various agencies, inconsistent feedback and findings and the need to suspend staff for lengthy periods of time while investigations are pending. It has become far more difficult to recruit and train qualified people for foster parenting and residential program work.

*HB 2903 focuses on three critical actions that will improve child safety outcomes:
Increases strategies available to the DHS to address child safety and accountability.
Creates prioritization, or triage, for the most concerning events.
Builds greater competency for sustaining safe environments in provider organizations.*

Please support HB 2903. We need these tools to reach safety goals. We want to thank you hearing bill and giving it the attention we need to reach these goals.

Elisa

Elisa Doebler-Irvine, Ph.D.
Executive Director