

January 30, 2017



**Boys &
Girls Aid**

To Senator Gelser, the Senate Human Services Committee Chair and Committee Members:

First, thank you all for your commitment to public service and to the children and families of Oregon. Your work is very much appreciated.

I am the President and CEO for Boys & Girls Aid and am concerned about the consequences of Senate Bills 243, 244, 245, 246 and 636. As you may know, Boys & Girls Aid was Oregon's first child welfare organization. The agency's core purpose is to impact the well-being of children in need. We work to strengthen the roles of adults in the lives of children, provide safe, stable living environments, and advocate for the needs of Oregon's most vulnerable children. The programs working toward these goals are infant and foster care adoption, options counseling, foster care for teens in the state and juvenile justices systems, and shelter and long-term housing for homeless and runaway youth.

The agency currently provides shelter and therapeutic foster care services for youth ages 10 - 18 in the custody of the Department of Human Services and Juvenile Departments. The youth come to us in crisis and extremely traumatized and we work to provide them emotional and physical safety. Unfortunately, the youth in these services have been negatively impacted by the unintended consequences of SB1515.

We understand your committee will be considering Senate Bills 243, 244, 245, 246 and 636. Again, I am concerned that without enough time for all child welfare agency's to work together on these bills, more unintended negative consequences will occur. As CEO at Boys & Girls Aid I want to make and see positive changes for children. Passing these bills without more time to work through the issues may cause more harm than good and that is not what any of us want for Oregon's children.

Please see the information below on our position on these bills and our amendments to make child safety more achievable. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dr. Suzan L. Huntington

President & CEO
Boys & Girls Aid Board



OREGON ALLIANCE OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS



Boys & Girls Aid

To the Senate Human Services Committee - Chair, Senator Gelser and Committee Members
For Consideration in the February 1, 2016 Hearing

Alliance Positions:

- SB 243 - Neutral
- SB 244 - Support with Amendments
- SB 245 - Support
- SB 246 – Support with Amendments
- SB 636 – Support with Amendments

SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS

- These are very important subjects - 24 minutes isn't adequate time for making law [this is the amount of time available for these 5 bills in the only hearing scheduled].
- We have ideas for making these bills better and we'd like a reasonable process for talking about them.
- Emergency passage is not necessary for these bills. Current data from DHS shows some important improvements have been made.

DUE PROCESS ISN'T PRESENT

- Conditions placed *based on allegations* have created penalties far greater than the penalty for a founded abuse or neglect.
- One mistake by a staff person can cause children to be removed from treatment, staff to be sent home without pay for months, and a program to close.
- This doesn't happen in any other arena that is responsible for keeping people safe:
 - A drunk airplane pilot doesn't result in closing the terminal and denying passengers the ability to travel.
 - A med error by a nurse doesn't shut down the clinic.
 - A surgeons error doesn't send patients in treatment home and close the hospital.
 - School bus driver in an accident doesn't result in the transportation for school children to stop.
- A staff error can also create a mandatory license revocation, shutting down organizations -- even if the organization did everything right.

CHECK THE CHILD or CHECK THE BOX?

- Legislation like these bills demand that providers prioritize meeting every element of every rule, contract condition, licensing condition and statutory condition -- every day.
 - The only thing they don't demand is that they meet the clinical standard of care for treatment and healing.
 - In some cases, these statutes and rules have caused direct harm to children.



Boys & Girls Aid

QUALITY CAPACITY IS CRITICAL FOR SAFETY

- Access for traumatized children is being reduced
 - Some programs evaluate whether they want to take children with high risk behaviors like suicide attempts, false allegations, and running away.
- 11 Behavioral Rehabilitation Service (BRS) contracts have been turned back since changes like SB 1515 started.
 - NONE OF THEM HAD ANY LICENSING OR INVESTIGATION ISSUES.
 - Community leaders who serve on nonprofit boards said they would not continue under the current environment of risk from statutes, rules and regulatory oversight with grave penalties.
 - Rates for BRS are universally recognized as 30% under cost.
- All culturally specific programs for children of color are gone.
- There is only 1 gender-specific program for girls left in the entire state.

**PLEASE SLOW DOWN THIS PROCESS TO HAVE THESE IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS.
CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS ARE SOMETHING EVERYONE NEEDS TO SOLVE.**

For More Information Contact:

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