



2685 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE • Salem, Oregon 97301 • LibertyHouseCenter.org • P: 503-540-0288 • F: 503-540-0293

February 9, 2017

Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services and Housing  
Oregon Legislative Assembly  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: HB 2221**

Dear Representative Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

**Child abuse is the most critical and deadly public health emergency facing the State of Oregon.**

On behalf of the children of Oregon I respectfully request your favorable consideration of HB 2221. The purpose of the bill is to increase access to child abuse assessment and intervention services and consistency of availability of those services to children throughout the entire State of Oregon. These services literally save lives.

As the CEO of Liberty House and the Board Chair of the Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers (ONCAIC), I can attest to the destructive, indeed, catastrophic effects of child neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse on children in Oregon. Child abuse assessment and intervention centers, defined in ORS 418.782(3), play a critical role in the multidisciplinary team response (ORS 418.747) by providing medical assessments, Karly's law assessments (ORS 419B.022-024), forensic interviews, and trauma-informed mental health services. If you are wondering how much abuse is really out there, I can tell you that **at Liberty House we are currently receiving between 5 and 10 calls for Karly's Law consultations and exams every day**. That is in addition to the full assessments – nearly 600 last year – for chronic physical and sex abuse. We can't keep up due to lack of funding.

The problem is that traditional medical billing formulas don't begin to cover the costs of providing these life-saving services. HB 2234 (2015) opened the door to increased reimbursement, and we are grateful for the CCOs and insurers who have responded by increasing reimbursement. The intent behind HB 2221 is to achieve consistency across the state and to move closer to covering the costs so that we don't have to resort to unsustainable – and inconsistent – fundraising mechanisms that are better suited to community projects that don't have such life or death implications.

Most of the 21 assessment centers in Oregon are non-profit organizations. All nonprofits struggle to raise funds, but for centers like ours it is exceptionally difficult. Many of my CEO colleagues and I struggle to communicate the critical nature of our services because discussing rape, beatings, child pornography, commercial sexual exploitation and torture is terribly difficult and some cases are so extreme they border on the unbelievable.

I am asking you to believe it. All of those things are happening to children in our state every day of every year. Having a robust, fully funded system of medical and forensic assessment in conjunction with our other DHS and law enforcement partners is crucial to putting a stop to this terrible societal reality.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison S. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature, the text "Alison S. Kelley, JD" is printed in a standard font.

Alison S. Kelley, JD