

**Testimony in Support of HB 4009  
Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary,  
February 13, 2018**

Chair Barker and members of the committee,

Partnership of Safety and Justice (PSJ) urges your support for HB 4009. PSJ is a nonprofit organization that has advocated for public safety and criminal justice policies in Oregon since 1999. We advance solutions to crime that ensure justice, equity, accountability, and healing. We do this by advocating for proven strategies that achieve safe and strong communities, prevent crime, and provide opportunities for both victims and people who commit crimes to rebuild their lives.

The preservation of families and support for parent-child relationships are key elements in rebuilding lives impacted by crime and the criminal justice system. This belief underlies much of PSJ's work, particularly our support for the enactment of the Family Sentencing Alternative, which the Oregon Legislature strengthened and expanded in 2017 with passage of The Safety and Savings Act (HB 3078).

The preservation of families should be one of Oregon's highest priorities. Children should not be separated from their parents except where necessary to protect the child from serious physical or emotional harm. Removal is a traumatic experience that can cause lasting and significant emotional harm.<sup>1</sup> Our state's current standard for removal is deepening racial disparities in our foster care system and sets too low a bar and too little accountability for protection of families. Under Oregon's current standard, American Indian/Alaska Native children are overrepresented in foster care at a rate 3.25 times that of the general population and for African American/Black children that rate is 1.8.<sup>2</sup>

HB 4009 safely keeps families together by aligning Oregon's statute with constitutional standards and standards adopted by 45 other states around the country. By keeping children out of foster care when they can be at home safely, we ensure that our families are stronger and our communities are safer. We urge you to support HB 4009.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Andy Ko, Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> [Church & Sankaran, Easy Come, Easy Go: The Plight of Children who Spend Less than Thirty Days in Foster Care, 2016](#); [Mitchell, The Neglected Transition, 2016](#); [Schneider et al., What Happens to Youth Removed from Parental Care: Health and Economic Outcomes for Women with a History of Out-of-Home Placement, 2009](#); [Doyle, Child Protection and Child Outcomes: Measuring the Effects of Foster Care, 2007](#).

<sup>2</sup> [DHS, 2016 Child Welfare Data Book](#).