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March 20, 2020

Co-Chairs Paul Holvey and Arnie Roblan
Oregon Legislature
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs,

I am writing to ask for your support of the recommendations by the Oregon Alliance (Safe Kids, Healthy Families, Strong Communities) to ensure that our children's system of care for at-risk and vulnerable children survives the current economic and health crisis.

The Next Door, Inc. (TNDI) has been serving vulnerable children and their families since 1971 throughout the mid-Columbia Gorge region. Currently, we provide services in five rural Oregon counties. Our Treatment Services department provides therapeutic foster care (proctor care) for youth in Behavioral Rehabilitative Services (BRS) through Oregon Youth Authority and Department of Human Services. These youth have behavioral challenges that have resulted in some to be adjudicated, including for sexual offenses and other crimes. All have been victims themselves of abuse and/or neglect. All of our youth receive 24/7 care in specially trained foster families who provide life skills and our alternative school that provides education as well as counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and life skills coaching

In addition to this program, *The Next Door has 30 other programs that help over 3,000 children, youth and adults throughout the Mid-Columbia region, including our Latinx and Native American neighbors.*

We are facing a crisis with staff concerns, workforce challenges, and a potential financial catastrophe. To practice social distancing in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, we have close our offices (in Hood River and The Dalles) to the public, but my 71 co-workers and I continue to work from home, providing much needed telephone or video conference contact with many of our clients as well as one-on-one contact with our foster youth and other clients. Frankly speaking, without our services, our community would be much worse off—the stress and anxiety caused by COVID-19 and the loss of service industry and other jobs, in addition to the isolation from social distancing, is wreaking havoc on our most vulnerable families. And, we have no idea how long we can hang on without a guarantee of financial support.

We urge you to allocate direct emergency funding to children's system providers to allow us to stabilize our workforce, hire temporary employees if needed, purchase critical PPE and infection control supplies, etc. Thank you for your consideration of our desperate needs.

Sincerely,

Janet L. Hamada, MSW
Executive Director