

# Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Carla Piluso, Co-Chair  
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety  
900 Court Street  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

In carrying out the mission of Youth Rights & Justice's, "Improving the lives of vulnerable children and families through legal representation and advocacy in the courts, legislature, schools and community," we serve youth and their parents impacted by the child welfare, education, criminal, and juvenile justice systems. YRJ is a member of the OYA Partnership Committee and resource to the Oregon Youth Authority.

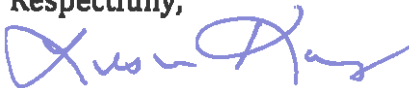
Most recently, we have served on OYA's external advisory committee on isolation reduction. OYA has been transparent in sharing what they are doing, open to feedback and questions. The agency has shown leadership and commitment in reducing isolation in a way that increases safety for youth and staff, as well as increases opportunities to work with young people to develop skills needed to become productive members of society.

We understand that resources are tight and that all of our interlocking systems that serve youth need to be adequately funded. Maintaining funding levels for OYA will help the agency continue transformational efforts to the benefit of the youth they serve and the public. OYA is committed to transforming the culture of the institution through its Positive Human Development initiative on the supervisor, staff, and youth levels.

OYA has identified several areas of risk that need attention which we also see – the levels of qualified mental health staffing, increasing Skill Development Coordinators to support isolation reduction efforts, and staffing to support the LGBTQI, Latinx, and African American youth. As youth of color represent 43% of OYA's population, appropriate cultural service is a component of reducing disparities in the system.

I urge you to do support these isolation reduction measures and culture change work that OYA is doing with Oregon's youth and continue the momentum it has developed.

Respectfully,



Leslie Kay  
Interim Executive Director