

March 13, 2019

Chair Alissa Keny Guyer
Vice Chair Ron Noble
House Committee on Housing and Human Services, Members

My name is Ashley Matsui, and I serve as the Program Director for Kids' HOPE Center in Coos County, Oregon. Our center is the County's only Child Abuse Intervention Center and serves vulnerable children throughout our county. For those of you not familiar with my county, we are located on the Southern Oregon coast just 100 miles from the California border. While Coos County is beautiful in geography, it also faces many barriers due to the limited resources and accessibility due to the rural nature of our location.

The Kids' HOPE Center exists to reduce child abuse through community awareness, intervention, and to provide supports for healing and victim justice. As the Director of a program serving child victims in the most underserved pockets of my county, I am strongly asking for your support of HB 3178.

I can't stress the importance of stable funding for my Center. Like many Centers, my Center relies solely on state and federal funding. Currently we are unable to afford on site crisis support, full medical support, and mental health services. Although referrals are made for families, onsite services would provide a more trauma-informed approach to the overall healing process of child victims. As a center serving a rural county, we face many different barriers, which create gaps in services. Some of the most basic needs such as transportation create barriers for families to receive services. An increase in funding would allow the Kids' HOPE Center to better bridge these gaps.

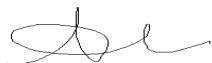
Children who encounter abuse or neglect deserve experts for treatment and healing. Children Advocacy Centers such as Kids' HOPE provide evidence-based, trauma-informed services from trained professionals. It's imperative that children receive immediate professional services after they encounter abuse or neglect. With limited funding, center's like ours often have to choose between operation costs and funding expert positions. It would be a great improvement if funding allowed Center's the peace of mind knowing that expert professionals could be funded without compromising basic center function. When children are treated and interviewed at outside entities such as the DHS office, police station or emergency room; trauma-informed services are not provided. Likely, children seen in these places need to be interviewed a second time at a center, which means they have to recount their abuse again. In addition, the child and family not seen in centers miss a crucial opportunity to receive formal follow-up services and referrals.

Ultimately, passing HB 3178 will make a huge difference in the lives of children in our community. Importantly, state investment will move us closer to an Oregon where all children regardless of their ability to pay or where they live, will be able to access evidence-based, trauma-informed services.

CAICs reduce unnecessary trauma and provide opportunities for children to heal from their abuse. We know we are making a huge difference, and urge your support of HB 3178 to even further increase our impact.

We hope you will join in our vision that every child in Oregon has the opportunity for expert, child-focused care when there are concerns of abuse.

Sincerely,



Ashley Matsui