



Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association
Representing Oregon's County Juvenile Departments
www.ojdda.org

- Joe Ferguson, President
- Jim Goodwin, President Elect
- Debra Patterson, Treasurer

OJDDA
305 NE 3rd St.
Prineville, OR 97754

Good Afternoon Chair Gelser and Human Services Committee Members:

My name is Lynne Schroeder. I am the Juvenile Department Director for Washington County. I am testifying in support of SB 1 and SB 221 on behalf of the Oregon Juvenile Department Director's Association and Washington County.

The juvenile justice system has long been the depository for young people who have had childhood experiences of neglect, abuse and trauma. These children grow up in homes where they may witness domestic violence, have parents who abuse substances and often don't have their basic needs met. They struggle in school, have difficulty concentrating, and begin experiencing suspensions and expulsions. They begin engaging in behaviors they may have witnessed or experienced, but now cause harm and put others at risk. When they appear before the Judge, the Judge places them in detention because there is not a safe, appropriate alternative. At this point, these young people are disproportionately African American, Latino and Native American. Despite the best intentions of all the professionals now involved in this youth's life, rather than helping the youth heal, we are causing more harm, more trauma and making the community less safe. Sixty percent eventually drop out of school, 70% have significant mental health issues which become exacerbated in detention and now they are more likely to reoffend. Judges then commit these youth to the Oregon Youth Authority because, again, there are no other options.

There is a void of resources available at every level of response that is needed. Just yesterday my department was informed that one of our primary treatment partners was unable to take any new clients because they have vacant positions they are desperately trying to fill. Even when there are providers that want to deliver the services, they don't have the resources to do so.

The good news is that the adolescent brain is not only highly vulnerable, but extraordinarily resilient. We have learned there is so much we can do to help them heal and to stop offending. We first need to have access to assessments to know what their needs are so we can provide early intervention with the appropriate treatment. We need to keep them at home and support their parents. We need to make sure our services are culturally responsive and effective for each of our populations. We need services that are funded at the local and county level so that we don't have to push children and youth into state systems in order to access services. We professionals need to have a system of effective coordination that provides access to the appropriate resources.

SB 1 and SB 221 are steps in the right direction. In addition to investing significant funding to help children and families with complex needs, these bills establish a leadership group appointed by the governor to provide oversight and accountability so that all of our systems work collaboratively and effectively. These bills begin to address some of the significant gaps in our systems and bring hope back into all of our efforts to do the right thing for our Oregon children.