

1207 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204
(503) 226-2209
(503) 228-4529 (fax)
charlesswindellspdx@gmail.com

March 20, 2019

Via electronic mail (shs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

The Honorable Sara Gelser
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: Support of SB 1 and SB 221 – Children and Youth with Specialized Needs Investments

Dear Senator Gelser and members of the committee,

Thank you the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1 and SB 221.

I am an Advisory Board member for Youth Villages of Oregon. I am also a former CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for children in foster care, and now serve on the Board of CASA for Children (Multnomah, Washington and Columbia Counties). Additionally, my wife and I are guardians of a fourteen-year-old girl who was formerly in foster care. My testimony is offered on my own behalf and not on behalf of CASA for Children or Youth Villages.

Senate Bills 1 and 221 address a significant problem in Oregon's child welfare system by increasing intervention and treatment for families and youth with specialized needs. I am most hopeful about the bills' potential to reduce the number of children with specialized needs who are placed in foster care by improving delivery of services to stabilize families before removal becomes necessary.

As a former CASA, I especially appreciate the bills' provisions for better cross-system collaboration, flexibility and responsiveness. Likewise, while I have never worked directly with foster children with acute needs, I know many treatment specialists and case workers who have explained to me in detail the need for high quality, short term placement resources and crisis support programs.

As a Youth Villages Advisory Board member, I am extremely proud of the excellent coverage of YV's crisis support (and also its LifeSet program for children aging out of the child welfare system) that aired on Oregon Public Broadcasting's Think Out Loud program last week on March 4 and 8th. This coverage can be heard at <https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/news-roundtable-foster-care-youth/>; <https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/east-county->

[economic-report-washington-schools-deficit-youth-villages/](#). These segments provide excellent testimonials of the value that SB 1 and SB 221 offer for Oregon. I anticipate that the bills' investments in service to children with acute needs will not only improve Oregon's response to that population, but by extension alleviate much of the stress afflicting our child welfare system generally.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and also for your efforts championing the needs of children and youth with specialized needs. We respectfully urge your support on SB 1 and SB 221, which will take the necessary next steps towards supporting children across Oregon.

Sincerely,

Charles Swindells

cc: Andrew Grover