



March 13, 2019

Chair Keny Guyer

Vice Chair Noble

House Committee on Housing and Human Services, Members,

We are Child Forensic Interviewers who work in Child Abuse Intervention Centers (CAIC) across Oregon. Collectively, we serve every county in Oregon. We also provide specialized trainings for child forensic interviewers and Multi-Disciplinary Team members throughout the state. As a group, we have provided interviews to tens of thousands of children; often we each see multiple children in one day. Some of us have over 10 years of experience, many of us have over 15 years.



We believe that all children deserve access to high quality, comprehensive, and coordinated care, regardless of where they live or their family's income. We ask that you support HB 3178 so we may continue to provide these essential services. HB 3178 will allow us to expand our services so we can interview more children, increase our coordination efforts across disciplines, and ensure that our community partners are both properly trained and supported in order to provide the requisite level of care and service to the most vulnerable in our respective communities.



Kaiser Permanente
OHSU Doernbecher Children's Hospital
Providence Children's Health
Randall Children's Hospital at Legacy Emanuel

Child Forensic Interviewing is a specialized, evidence-based interviewing technique guided by the Oregon Interviewing Guidelines. Forensic Interviews are specialized interviews of children following allegations of abuse or violence. These interviews are designed to elicit comprehensive disclosure in a way that both reduces trauma for the child and provides law enforcement, case workers, medical personnel, and others the opportunity to collect essential evidence to aid prosecution. Child Forensic Interviews are conducted in a CAIC so children are in a safe, developmentally appropriate, and trauma informed environment that also provides access or referrals to necessary medical and mental health care.



Without CAICs, children must tell their story to law enforcement, case workers, medical providers, and others in harsh environments that are not child-friendly. This forces children to relive their trauma over and over again, which research has demonstrated can have disastrous physical and mental health consequences over time. Moreover, when interviews are conducted by individuals who are not adequately trained as child forensic interviewers, it can lead to retraumatization, refusal to disclose, recantation, or incomplete information. Without our specialized Child Forensic Interview services, we simply cannot bring as many perpetrators to justice.



With adequate resources and staff, in many communities we are able to respond to an urgent need and provide same day appointments for children. This was the case for one six year old girl whose family was originally advised to seek care for her in an emergency room, but was instead re-routed to one of our CAICs. That morning, a concern of sexual abuse by her grandfather had been reported. Rather than waiting for hours in an emergency department, this little girl was seen for a comprehensive evaluation by a forensic interviewer and a certified child abuse pediatrician, in a child



friendly, developmentally appropriate environment. In addition to her specialized medical evaluation, her parents were provided with much needed support and essential information so they could in turn support their child through the process. Today, this child is participating in trauma-focused counseling at this same CAIC. This case demonstrates the ideal of providing timely, comprehensive services, and minimizing trauma exposure for children.

While we all recognize the importance of providing children with quality care and bringing perpetrators to justice, we are currently experiencing difficulties ensuring all children have access to our services. Many of our CAICs serve multiple rural and frontier counties, meaning children must travel for hours to access our services. Some CAICs have long waitlists, meaning children must wait weeks before they can see us. And many CAICs cannot afford to hire full time child forensic interviewers, leading to more wait time before children can access a CAIC. The support provided by HB 3178 would allow us to work more effectively to promote the immediate and long term safety and wellbeing of children across Oregon.

We know we are making a huge difference to the lives of children, and urge your support of HB 3178 to even further increase our impact.

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

Sincerely,

Tiffney Burns, *Mt. Emily Safe Center, LaGrande, Oregon*
Samantha Fenner, *Klamath-Lake CARES, Klamath Falls, Oregon*
Katie Greathouse, *Mt. Emily Safe Center, LaGrande, Oregon*
Barbara Hendrix, *KIDS Center, Bend, Oregon*
Drew Mitchell, *Kids' FIRST, Eugene, Oregon*
Rachel Petke, *CARES Northwest, Portland, Oregon*
Jennifer Wheeler, *CARES Northwest, Portland, Oregon*