

April 24, 2019

**House Committee on Human Resources and Housing
Support For Senate Bill 543**

I am Robert Bailey of Hillsboro, Oregon. I am unable to appear in person but here speak in support of this vital legislation. I have been a supporter of Washington County Kids, an organization advocating for the return of support programs to our communities following the demise of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families.

I am a retired social worker and have worked in child protection, juvenile justice, children's mental health, support services for children with disabilities, community youth services, and child abuse prevention. I am also an advocate of Goal One of Oregon's SB 100, citizen participation (in land use). I strongly encourage you to consider this landmark legislation as citizen (voter) participation in the support of our children, youth and families. I was a member of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families (Washington County), and also administered programs in part funded through that commission (Washington County Community Youth Services).

Cost benefit and cost effectiveness analysis are complex and have been underway for some time. Investments in prevention can be considered to offset the expense of interventions later and throughout the course of a lifespan.

Should communities take up children's services district, they would have fundamentally a say, a choice, a vote.

This brings democracy to everyday life and in an area people frequently want to make a difference, in the lives of our children.

Should voters choose to enact a children's special district....then,

- Support programs could have a vital source of stable funding.
- Programs and funding would be locally designed and locally controlled, adapted to the locale and conditions.
- Children and youth and their families at risk of various negative outcomes could receive support and remediation.

- Funding could encourage public-private partnerships, leverage funds from other funding sources, while encouraging the use of evidence based program models and best practices.
- Communities would have continuous discussions about children's services as they voted on district board members through time, in part evaluating program effectiveness.

Counties that are undergoing positive growth and development are often seen as having sufficient resources. Yet even rapid growth and development bring rapid population changes and often children, youth and families that come new to a community lack the networks to obtain support and are not connected to natural helping systems: they become at risk too. Washington County is often seen as undergoing positive growth, so why is advocacy coming from here? Our development of infrastructure is active, yet lacks the critical foundation of assuring our vulnerable human infrastructure. A choice to support a Children's Special District will not be easy given the threshold for petition signers and the potential costs associated with entering the ballot. Yet if voters want to make a difference in this way, please allow them the avenue to say so.

Thank you.

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