

January 29, 2020

Chair Tawna Sanchez  
Vice-Chair Sherrie Sprenger  
Vice-Chair Janelle Bynum  
Committee Members  
Oregon House Committee on Judiciary

RE: Support for HB 4040 – Creation of Family Treatment Courts

Dear Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Sprenger and Bynum, and Members of the Committee:

I have just learned of and am now writing in support of HB 4040, which would establish family treatment court (“FTC”) programs in a number of courts including Clackamas County. HB 4040 would prevent or reduce the duration of a child’s placement in foster care due to a parent’s untreated substance use disorder (“SUD”).

For a good number of years I did an array of juvenile and termination cases, both on the trial and appellate level. One of the most prevalent causes of these cases were parents with untreated drugs and alcohol issues which impacted their ability to parent in a minimally effective way. The children were pulled out of the home, visitation was set at a couple of hours per week and while I am sure there were some success stories, I personally saw few. No one really gained by this system. I realize the first concern is the children, but from what I saw, the foster care was not always the way to keep them safe. What they wanted and needed were parents who were being supervised to get and stay clean. I completely understand that love is not necessarily enough but with a treatment court, it and supervision can go a long way to protecting families and children without creating the extraneous wreckage. This program seems very worthy and I strongly ask that you consider it.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Kohlhoff, lawyer (OSB 80398), City Councilor in Lake Oswego

Cc: Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer, House Committee on Human Services

House Speaker Tina Kotek