

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: February 3, 2020
Re: HB 4112 Support for Co-located Advocates

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I respectfully request your support for HB 4112 to conduct the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study and provide Oregon educators the resources, curricula, and training for comprehensive child abuse prevention, sex education and healthy relationships training that fully support Oregon's students and is required by Oregon law.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to overcome poverty. Many of our clients seek our assistance to address legal issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking. These issues greatly contribute to the vulnerability of our clients, and further trap them in poverty. Comprehensive education plays a critical role in prevention.

The Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study was piloted in Lane County and through HB 4112 will be expanded statewide. If implemented, Oregon will become the first state to develop an effective way to collect prevalence data to more accurately reflect the problem of child abuse and neglect. The study will measure child abuse and neglect and will provide real data in order to better understand the experience of our youth and how to reduce prevalence of abuse. This one-time investment will help our systems to better care for youth.

In addition, HB 4112 provides funding to the Oregon Department of Education to enable full implementation of Erin's Law. Studies show that comprehensive sex education programs not only improve health outcomes, they additionally help prevent child abuse, sexual violence, and gender-based discrimination. Funding is needed to provide the technical assistance needed to help school districts around the state understand the law's requirements and implement comprehensive trainings.

HB 4112 provides multiple important avenues to reduce and address child abuse around Oregon. It takes the first step in expanding agency capacity for supporting school districts in implementing comprehensive sex education, Erin's Law, and healthy relationship training programs and it creates a way to make data-informed decisions that support youth. OLC urges your support for HB 4112.