



January 31, 2020

Chair Keny Guyer
Vice Chair Williams
Vice Chair Noble

House Committee on Housing and Human Services, Members:

My name is Kevin Dowling. I serve as the Executive Director of CARES Northwest. In our 32-year history, we have cared for over 40,000 children primarily from Multnomah and Washington Counties. Many of these children are survivors of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. At CARES Northwest, we identify when child abuse has happened, and intervene to keep children safe and start them on the path toward healing.

I am requesting your support of HB 4112 to increase funding of Oregon's 20 Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) by \$3 million.

HB 4112 would support the critical role Oregon's CACs have in protecting children. Last year, Oregon's CACs served almost 8,000 children. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, child abuse impacts an estimated 120,000 Oregon children every year.

On average, state investment makes up only 17% of CAC budgets, even though CAC services are mandated by Karly's law and the need is growing. CACs serve all children regardless of ability to pay, but the current level of state support means many children endure long waitlists for services. Worse, children might not be seen by a CAC at all. Instead, they may be interviewed in police stations or emergency rooms by staff with no specialized training to assess children for child abuse, and without the team of multidisciplinary experts working together—which is a cornerstone of the CAC approach.

At CARES Northwest, increased funding from HB 4112 would help meet the growing needs of children in Washington County and East Multnomah County, who often endure long lines of traffic to get the medical care and trauma therapy services they need and deserve. We could see children more quickly, and explore using telemedicine as a resource to CACs in rural areas.

Passing HB 4112 will make a huge difference in the lives of all Oregon's children. It will move us closer to an Oregon where all children have access to a team of experts who are dedicated to supporting children, stopping abuse and beginning the process of healing.

Sincerely,

Kevin Dowling
Executive Director, CARES Northwest



NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
ALLIANCE*
ACCREDITED
MEMBER