



Oregon Child Abuse Solutions

Protect. Heal. Lead.

June 24, 2020

1827 NE 44th Avenue, Suite 220
Portland, Oregon 97213

Dear President Courtney, Speaker Kotek and members of the Joint Committee on The First Special Session of 2020,

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions represents a network of over 20 children's advocacy centers serving all 36 counties. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide statutorily mandated services to children who are suspected victims of abuse including specialized medical exams and forensic interviews.

Oregon's CACs receive referrals from law enforcement and child welfare partners, and through our work, we often understand in-depth the frequency, severity, and histories of abuse experienced by children and youth. The work of SB 155 to help close gaps in follow-up and investigation of allegations involving third parties is necessary to keep children safe.

Every day we do not have an adequate system in place, we are putting more children at risk of abuse and are missing opportunities to intervene in behaviors that can predict future abuse. We are missing opportunities to prevent abuse and/or prevent increasing severity of abuse, that we sometimes can't get back.

We support the tireless work of Senator Gelser, Department of Human Services and other partners, to fully account for the proper structure, trainings, and resources needed to follow-up on third party allegations, and we also want to make clear that fully implementing this program as soon as possible should continue to be a priority for our decision-makers so that the deadline of April 2021 is met. Each day, week, and month we delay is risky for our children in life-altering ways.

Particularly during COVID-19, CACs are seeing increasing cases over time and heightened severity of abuse. We worry about essential workers and other parents or caregivers leaving their children with individuals that are not captured in the groups mentioned by this bill – particularly those who fall outside of the child care definition ORS 329A.250. We worry that allegations pertaining to unsafe individuals are falling through the cracks, in what is likely the most vulnerable time period for children in our lifetimes.



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Right now, we are witnessing a historic underreporting of cases and our CACs have only just begun to treat children for whom delayed reporting and intervention has created more severe and complex abuse. We know what we are seeing now, this early in the pandemic, is only the beginning of a tidal wave of abuse.

We support and understand the need for SB 1605, and urge lawmakers to continue to prioritize the protection of children and immediate resourcing of this stop gap by April 2021.

Sincerely,
Becky Jones
Executive Director

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Becky Jones