

# Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

June 25, 2020

Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020  
900 Court St. NE, Room 347  
Salem, OR 97301  
(sent by email to [j1ss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:j1ss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov))

Re: Support for HB 4214: Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act

Dear Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek; Co-Vice Chairs Girod and Drazan; and Members of the Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020:

As Oregon's defense firm dedicated exclusively to juvenile law, YRJ is court-appointed to represent children in foster care, parents whose children have been removed, and youth in the juvenile justice system. We are a team of 35 attorneys, legal assistants, and other specialists. We represent over 800 clients each year. Roughly 80% of our clients are in the child welfare (foster care) system, with the balance in the juvenile justice system. All of our clients come from low income families. Most have suffered significant trauma and many have physical, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Approximately 45% are children of color.

Over our four-decade history, we have also worked with the systems supporting vulnerable children, youth and families, changing them for the better. Because of our unique position handling court-appointed juvenile cases, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems. Through this, our work has touched hundreds of thousands of Oregonians.

We've witnessed the trauma and broken-heartedness that occurs when Native American children are separated from their families and their culture. We are committed to protecting and honoring the rights of Native American children and parents—to remain together, to remain connected to their Tribe and culture, to receive supports and services to which they are legally entitled, and to procedural fairness and due process.

YRJ supports passage of HB 4124-the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act. This bill, formerly HB 4148 (2020 session), was developed by a broad group of stakeholders. Under the leadership of Representative Sanchez, this stakeholder group developed a collective solution that preserves and honors the rights of Native American children, youth, and families.

We thank Representative Sanchez and all of the supporters of this bill for understanding the importance of this bill and encouraging its passage.

Sincerely,

Amy S. Miller  
Executive Director