



February 17, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

From: The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 92

The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association has concerns about Senate Bill 92 and the effect it may have on release of reports and other information containing substantiated allegations of abuse involving child caring agencies.

Currently, state law directs the DHS Child-Caring Licensing Agency to release quarterly reports summarizing substantiated allegations of neglect or abuse of a child at a licensed child care agency. These reports summarize date of abuse, type of abuse (including inappropriate restraint and seclusion) and corrective actions taken.

These reports allow parents, the media, as well as members of the general public to assess both the care provider and the state agency's actions taken in response to reports of neglect or abuse. This type of information can help safeguard children who are not in the care of their parents and helps to build Oregonians' trust in our government's performance and transparency.

SB 92 seeks to apply the same privacy protections to records under ORS 418 that are present under ORS 419B. It's worth noting that ORS 419B contains exceptionally strong exemptions to public disclosure of details involving child abuse reports. Among our concerns with this change, is that abuse covered by ORS 418 includes settings funded or licensed by the state and covers many people in the care of the state. Applying the 419B standard may exempt critical information from disclosure, preventing the media (and others) from detecting patterns and keeping the entire public from assessing whether the agencies entrusted with some of our most vulnerable children are doing their jobs.

We urge the committee to consider the serious consequences of this legislation, both for individuals and our state. Thank you for your time and attention to this very important matter.

