

March 30, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Nosse, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services,

As Executive Director of Connections365, an organization dedicated to providing services to improve the lives of youth and young adults in Marion and Polk Counties and Oregon at large, I urge you to support Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Policy Option Package (POP) 110. This would provide an upward adjustment in the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) rate to address the 40 to 60% annual staff turnover rate. It would also provide over \$3M in federal matching funds. During 2020 our organization experienced a 55% turnover rate for our direct care staff positions.

As a child caring agency Connections365 provides treatment foster care for youth placed by the Oregon Youth Authority and Oregon Department of Human Services, residential care for Oregon Youth Authority serving youth who are stepping down from MacLaren as well as youth at-risk of being committed to the closed facility. We also provide one-on-one mentoring services for Oregon's at-risk youth and outpatient mental health services for all ages. Our BRS programs are community-based and support youth with severe psychosocial, emotional, and behavioral issues through behavioral intervention, counseling, and skills-training. Our programs also support youth in addressing their significant trauma and we work to help youth build their own resiliency.

POP 110 would begin to address high staff turnover by adjusting the Oregon Wage Information (OWI) to 2021 data. It would also adjust the rate ongoing to assure that the most current salary data for direct care and other staff are used in the agencies' legislatively approved budgets. Our experience is that staff stability directly impacts positive outcomes for our youth. Turnover creates disruption of our care for the youth, lost productivity of the staff, increased workload for existing employees including overtime and burnout, and loss productivity of our supervisors.

Thank you for your continued commitment in ensuring youth and young adults have access to high-quality supports and services so they too will have an opportunity to thrive and overcome the barriers they face that can threaten their ability to live out a full and healthy life.

Sincerely,

Debby Lute
Executive Director