

Testimony
Oregon House Committee on General Government
SB 299 – Children’s Service Districts
May 4, 2021
Capitol Building, Salem, OR

Participant for the record:

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Chair Wilde, Vice Chair Leif, Vice Chair Lively, Representative Valderrama and Representative Zika:

My name is Martha Brooks. I am the State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation, bi-partisan, non-profit organizations of senior law enforcement and business leaders with over 7000 members nationally and over 200 members in Oregon. We support investments in children that not only improve the quality of children’s lives, but also improve the safety of the community and provide a ready, willing, and able workforce. We believe that by providing kids with safe and constructive places after school, on weekends, and during the summer does just that.

Some of you may be familiar with the phrase the “Prime Time for Juvenile Crime.” It is an uncomfortably familiar phrase for law enforcement officials. They know that this time is between the hours of 3 and 6 pm when school is out and parents are still at work. It is when children and teens are out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision and when they tend to engage in risky behaviors. This is when juvenile crime suddenly soars and kids commit crimes or they become victims of crime.

Our business leaders also know that if youth are not in constructive programs, they are more likely to drop out of school, not graduate from high school and not become part of a viable work force. Our members understand that if youth have access to high-quality, affordable afterschool and out-of-school-time programming, which complements their learning in school, they benefit from a variety of outcomes, and are less likely to commit or be victims of crime. These programs keep our communities safer, our kids healthier, and prepare them for a future rich with opportunity.

Consider the facts. Child poverty continues to rise in Oregon. Child abuse and neglect continues to eat away at our state funding. Even with a slight bump this year, Oregon’s graduation rates are still among the lowest in the nation. To look at the numbers and the lack of services and options for youth when they are not in school, will tell you there is a high need and demand for services for these kids and their parents; however funding for these programs is sorely lacking. To provide much needed out-of-school activities, support to families and quality programs, would help our kids be successful and at the same time reduce the amount of funding needed to address problems. **Afterschool and out-of-school-time programs are cost-effective, saving at least \$3**



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for every \$1 invested by increasing children's future earning potential and reducing crime and welfare costs.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation support SB 299, the Children's Service Districts Bill, as it will allow Oregon communities to decide if and how to invest in their children by providing local dollars for out-of-school activities. As state legislators, you see the big picture and see the need statewide. Your budgets are tight and you cannot always provide the necessary resources. Many local communities not only want more services, they are willing to vote and pay for them if given the opportunity. What stands in their way is the mechanism to raise those funds.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation ask you to vote yes on SB 299 and move it out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation. Give communities the opportunity to give their own kids a chance to get on the right track and succeed in life.

Attached – Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Fact Sheet