



## WASHINGTON COUNTY CHILD ABUSE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Justice Services Building  
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February 9, 2021

Chair Williams  
Vice Chair Alonso Leon  
Vice Chair Lewis  
Vice Chair Meek  
Vice Chair Sanchez  
Vice Chair Wilde

House Committee on Human Services, members

RE: HB 2826

Dear Representatives,

On behalf of the Washington County Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Team, we would like to voice our strong support for HB 2826, which includes a six million dollar increase in funding for child abuse assessment centers (CACs) statewide. As you are aware, our Child Abuse MDT is a legislatively established collaboration of representatives including the Department of Human Services Child Welfare, the Washington County District Attorney's Office, the Department of Health and Human Services, local school districts, the Washington County Juvenile Department, all local law enforcement agencies, CARES NW and other community partners. In Washington County, the MDT and its members meet regularly to address issues regarding child abuse intervention and response, and to help ensure the safety of children in our county.

Washington County's designated regional child abuse assessment center, CARES NW, provides essential services for victimized and at-risk children, which includes but isn't limited to medical exams, forensic interviews, preventative education, specialized therapy and supportive family services. CARES NW works in close collaboration with law enforcement, DHS, district attorneys and our other community partners to ensure that trauma to children is minimized over the course of a child abuse investigation and beyond. MDT partners routinely rely on CARES NW's expertise in the field of child abuse intervention to help ensure the safety of children in our community.

Even though CARES NW (and CACs statewide) provide statutorily mandated services, engage in unparalleled community collaboration, and are widely recognized as setting "best practice" for identifying and responding to child abuse, state funding for Centers only constitutes a small percentage of their total funding. An increase of six million dollars will help increase state funding of Centers and will directly impact children's access to these critical services. Considering the rapidly rising juvenile population in Washington County, increasing funding to CARES NW is clearly of urgent importance to our entire MDT. Please support the swift passage of HB 2826, and help ensure that children who have been victimized or are at-risk of abuse get the support and services they so desperately deserve.

Sincerely,

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Washington County Child Abuse MDT Chair  
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