



Parrott Creek

Serving Children and Families

Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services in regards to HB 2340

February 26, 2021

Chair Williams, Co-Chairs Lief and Ruiz, distinguished members of the committee. I am writing today in support of HB 2424, The Child Safety and Workforce Improvement Act.

While there is much to be proud of in Oregon, there is one area where we continue to fail and that is with our population of vulnerable youth – and by extension their families and their communities. Oregon fails year after year to adequately invest in appropriate community services and supports. We should all be ashamed that Oregon ranks 36th for teen suicide rates, 39th for K-12 education achievement AND 47th for child & youth access to mental health treatment and support. Youth of color are typically two, three or four times more adversely affected than their white peers in nearly all indicators of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Our staff show up every day for youth and children. They are compassionate and motivated. However, they have high caseloads, are working in a complicated regulatory environment, and are with children and youth who have significant and complex needs. All the while, they receive poor compensation – benefits, wages and a lack of advancement opportunities due to the inadequate resourcing of poorly structured government contracts.

HB 2424 makes crucial investments in our nonprofit workforce. Specifically, the Child Safety and Workforce Improvement Act will invest:

- \$1.25M per biennium in training funds to improve child/youth safety, treatment outcomes, regulatory compliance, and improve the retention of a highly qualified provider workforce.
- \$2.5M per biennium to support the recruitment and retention of staff of color.
- \$250K per biennium for student loan forgiveness focusing on key staff roles.
- \$250K per biennium to begin an apprentice program for QMHAs/Ps.

Parrott Creek Child & Family Services expanded its programs during the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to increases in acute needs of foster youth. We now offer:

- Case Management, Transitional Housing and Independent Living support to homeless youth and youth aging out of foster care facing housing insecurity;
- Residential and Outpatient Treatment for highly traumatized youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice system;
- Transition support into stable housing
- Clean-and-sober housing for mothers under the age of 25 reunifying with their children (predominantly infants and toddlers) have been in the care and custody of ODHS.

I appreciate your continued commitment in ensuring that ALL of Oregon's children have the opportunity to grow up in strong, stable and loving families.

Simon Fulford
Executive Director