



February 22, 2022

Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health, and Recovery  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support House Bill (HB) 4012A

Chair Gelsner Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to ask for your **urgent support for HB4012** (sponsored by the House Human Services Committee). This critical bill will make a difference for children and youth involved in the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare (ODHS/CW) and/or working with the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA).

For decades these critical services have been underfunded. Inadequate reimbursement rates and little investment into longer term strategies, exacerbated by the pandemic and the job market, has left us in a crisis mode.

Our highly qualified staff often could make 30% or 40% or more working elsewhere, so they often leave, sometimes after just a few months. The staff we do have show up for our children and youth every day, but with low pay and high caseloads, there is little incentive. Also, there simply aren't enough candidates for jobs in these important fields to keep our program and dozens of others throughout the state fully staffed.

This turnover and lack of capacity is bad for our program, bad for children and youth (who desperately need stability), and bad for the state, because if kids can't get quality services at our program, they usually end up somewhere else in the system that costs the state more.

I believe it would make more sense to properly fund the system in the first place. It would save the state millions of dollars, and certainly be good for youth and children.

HB4012 points us in the direction of a long-term solution by:

- Directing the Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Youth Authority, to conduct a comprehensive review of service provider rate structures for child caring agencies.



- ODHS, in consultation with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the OYA, shall submit a report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to human services, in the manner provided in ORS 192.245, no later than February 28, 2023. The report must include the findings from the review under subsection (1) of this section and recommendations for updates to the rate structures that the department, the OHA and the OYA determine are necessary to promote long-term workforce sustainability.

I urge you to support HB4012 and thank you for supporting Oregon's children and youth.

Royce Bowlin