

Submitter: Karen Rush
On Behalf Of: Childrens Center
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2479

I am writing in support of HB 2479. I am the Executive Director of Children's Center, a Nationally Accredited Child Advocacy Center (CAC) serving all children and families in Clackamas County. This legislation is important in ensuring that the important work of state-mandated Child Advocacy Centers continue in the best interest of the children we serve. Unfortunately, the lack of certain immunities for CACs and employees has resulted in risks for such organizations and makes our work more difficult and expensive for tax-payers.

Many of our partners have some level of liability protection when performing job duties in good faith. School officials, law enforcement, DAs and even CASAs have some level of protection. CACs do not have any protection, currently, and are vulnerable to lawsuits from many sides, for example, when guardians are upset abuse is founded and DHS takes that information and makes a decision or does an action the guardian does not like or when Abuse is NOT founded despite thorough investigation, but abuse is occurring and something happens to the child later on.

The need for protection is clear, and CACs in 19 other states do enjoy protections currently. We are pursuing a narrow, simple ask:

- an employee or designated agent of CAC participating in good faith in a child abuse assessment shall have immunity from any civil liability that may be incurred or imposed related to assessment, or judicial proceeding resulting from the assessment. This does not apply in cases of gross negligence or reckless, wanton or intentional misconduct.
- Additionally, in order to receive these protections, the CAC must be accredited and in good standing with the National Children's Alliance, or actively working towards accreditation.

Passage of this legislation will ensure that best practices are being followed and that the CAC is held to the highest standard of care. Please support this legislation to help further ensure the safety and well-being of Oregon's children.