



Judiciary Committee Testimony in Support of HB2732 February 2, 2023

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Wallan and Andersen and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of Prevent Child Abuse Oregon, we are pleased to submit testimony in support of HB2732. The mission of Prevent Child Abuse Oregon is to assist communities in strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect before it occurs. PCAO leads the Child Abuse Prevention Collaborative to assist with this work and Children’s Advocacy Centers are a key member.

We urge support for HB 2732 and increased funding for Children’s Advocacy Centers (CAC). CACs provide critical services to youth and families experiencing abuse, neglect, and violence. CACs ensure that young people have a safe place to disclose experiences of abuse, neglect, and violence, enabling staff to properly diagnose and offer treatment services so that they may heal and access safety.

There are over 24 CACs across the state, serving all 36 counties by providing services like medical exams and forensic interviews—as well as prevention services and follow up family services and mental health treatment for youth who present with concerns of abuse. CAC’s work in close collaboration with law enforcement, DHS, district attorneys, schools and other community partners during child abuse assessments and investigations, both to be cost-effective and because this model has shown improved outcomes for children.

When young people cannot access a CAC, the likelihood of misdiagnosis is higher, which can result in youth remaining in unsafe situations or being removed from their homes unnecessarily. Lack of access to CACs may also result in additional trauma as a result of youth receiving services in police stations and emergency rooms, rather than a child- friendly setting designed specifically for them. We know this impact is a greater concern for youth of color and those from communities with historically traumatic experiences with response systems.

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MISSION: Strengthening families to prevent child abuse and neglect.

VISION: All children live in safe homes and supportive communities, regardless of race, class, culture, or geography.

We must ensure that child welfare, and community agencies that support child well-being, have what is needed to intervene and keep kids safe. Investing \$6 million in Children's Advocacy Centers is urgent and necessary to accomplish these critical goals. Young people in Oregon have earned the right to be served by a CAC specialist following their experiences of abuse and neglect. More than that – young people deserve an investment in a future without violence and abuse, which is why we are proud to support this bill and urge your support of HB 2732.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Cunningham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicole Cunningham,
Executive Director