

March 2, 2023

Representative Kropf, Chair  
House Committee on Judiciary  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Kropf, Co-Chair Andersen, Co-Chair Wallen, and Members of the Committee,

Multnomah County urges your support for HB 2327 and the -1 amendment. Its passage, which establishes a minimum age of 12 for prosecution in a juvenile court jurisdiction, is a practical way to increase public safety while providing meaningful interventions and support when a child does harm.

Children have a reduced capacity to control their impulses and consider long-term consequences of their actions due to the lack of maturity of the developing brain.<sup>1</sup> The good news is, children have a greater capacity for rehabilitation and reform than adults. This is because their brains change as they grow, responding to their environment, supports, and resources.

Juvenile departments have unique expertise in using evidence-based assessment tools to identify risk for future delinquency. Responding to the individual's risk and needs means two things: we can connect children and their families with appropriate community resources, and focus on the highest risk children who need our services the most.

HB 2327 would provide much needed funding to county juvenile departments, who are equipped to provide preventative services that are often not available to children under 12. In Multnomah County, this would include evidence-based case management and culturally responsive services. Engagement with our department would assist families, schools, and treatment providers in maintaining a connection with youth and families with increased accountability provided by a juvenile court counselor.

We strongly urge your support for HB 2327 and the -1 amendment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kyla Armstrong-Romero  
Director, Dept. of Community Justice Juvenile Services  
Multnomah County

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<https://www.aecf.org/work/child-welfare/jim-casey-youth-opportunities-initiative/areas-of-expertise/adolescent-brain-development>

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-34/august-2015/understanding-the-adolescent-brain-and-legal-culpability/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-34/august-2015/understanding-the-adolescent-brain-and-legal-culpability/)

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/11/juvenile-justice-system-teens>