

# STAHANCYK, KENT & HOOK P.C.

Attorneys at Law

## Portland Office

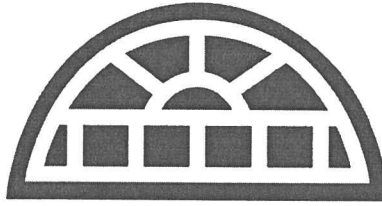
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Date: March 14, 2023

To: Chair Kropf and Members of the Committee

From: Jody L. Stahancyk

### **In Support of SB 306 Paraprofessional Licensing**

After 49 years of practicing law, 36 years of specializing in family law, I am the senior shareholder of six law offices in Astoria, Vancouver, Portland, Eugene, Bend and Prineville, with more on the horizon. None of these offices are through merger or acquisition, but good ole' start from scratch.

Because judges were being faced with pro per clients with troubling children's issues, I created a foundation called Child Centered Solutions (CCS) to teach lawyers how to represent children, and therefore help the Court protect children. SK&H lawyers in each location are paid to volunteer their time to represent children for free. When it became apparent war stories were of limited value, CCS began bringing in national speakers to teach the latest research that shows what is in the best interest of children during times of conflict.

SK&H has a division called Legal Resolution Services (LRS), which provides unbundled legal services, mediation, and form drafting for those who have limited funds or don't want to incur the cost of a full legal team.

As a member of the board of education for Clatsop Community College, I am aware of the need for training and providing services for everyone.

At SK&H, we feel so strongly the need to have options for every potential client that we, SK&H, have promised every legal assistant, that if you pass this legislation, will train them according to the rules and pay for them to become licensed paralegals.

Does this mean they can take their skills elsewhere after we pay? Sure, but this happens every day, including lawyers we train. Our model doesn't work for everyone, but we can promise good training that will allow the people we've trained to go out and make the practice of law a better place.

SK&H does firm-wide, 30-minute, weekly trainings for all legal assistants on topics such as petition drafting, child support calculations, and trial preparation, which are recorded for posterity of future hires.

The objection to this legislation appears the same as complaining when your neighbor's prize bull hops your fence and impregnates your herd. A little too late and a bit short sighted because in 9 months and 10 days you will have free babies.

A little late because today people are already actively selling this service, and yet, they are not licensed, nor do they have malpractice insurance. There is more than one disbarred lawyer out there currently practicing as a legal assistant, and the bar can do nothing about it because there is no licensure. Law firms are billing out people, who may or may not be trained, at paralegal rates without any regulation.

A bit short sighted because those lawyers who are afraid licensed paralegals will take business away from them, are the same lawyers that don't take this kind of case. At SK&H, we refer out more than 75% (more than 100 people per month) of all applicants who ask to be our client. Everyone who calls, except for the spouses of clients we already represent, are offered a referral because it is scary to call a lawyer and ask for help. We cannot find enough lawyers to help all the people coming through our doors.

As innovative problem solvers, licensing family law paralegals will make basic legal services available to more people, save the Court's time in dealing with pro pers and allow the bar to regulate the process.

Very truly yours,



Jody L. Stahanczyk