

February 6, 2024

Chair Gelsler Blouin, members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions (OCAS) is the statewide network of Children's Advocacy Centers. Our 24 members serve all 36 counties as the entities that provide child abuse medical exams, forensic interviews, family support, and follow up treatment services when there is a question of child abuse.

OCAS is very grateful to Sen. Knopp for his long-standing commitment to and support of, Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) in Oregon. We support Sen. Knopp's stated goals of increasing funding and stabilizing these vital resources for Centers.

We are thankful to Sen. Knopp for the opportunity to provide technical feedback on this bill and his amendments. The -2 amendments do solve several of the technical concerns that CACs had with the underlying SB 1579, and we greatly appreciate the continued collaboration on remaining challenges. There is also a House Bill this Session (HB 4140) that has similar goals to SB 1579, and we look forward to the continued opportunity to work on collaborative efforts.

The stability of funding is of particular concern of OCAS and our members. Over the last two biennia, the Legislature has made critical investments in Children's Advocacy Centers. These modest investments of \$6M in 2021 and 2023 have been instrumental to CACs and were largely used to increase capacity through hiring new staff. For example, this funding allowed some CACs to add an on-site medical provider for the first time, while others increased capacity by adding additional bilingual forensic interviewers.

We also know that CACs could do great things with additional state dollars. OCAS has identified a need for increased mental and behavioral health treatment opportunities. Some CACs are already able to offer these services on site, while others are working to get programs off the ground. Additional funding could also be used to further our statewide goal of accreditation.

Again, we appreciate Sen. Knopp's support of Children's Advocacy Centers and the children that they serve, and his ongoing collaboration.

Sincerely,

Shelly Smith
Executive Director