

Submitter: Gil Levy  
On Behalf Of: KIDS Center  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: SB1587

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 1587. I am the Executive Director with KIDS Center, the nationally accredited children's advocacy center serving Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties in Central Oregon, as well as providing regional services for Harney, Sherman and Wheeler Counties.

When a family receives services at a CAC, they are participating in a child abuse evaluation and the associated investigation into the matter, which is always a very emotional and difficult experience for everyone involved. Because the outcome of such an investigation may include changes in legal guardianship, estrangement within families, and criminal charges, every organization and professional involved with these cases operates in an emotionally charged space which may change the course of a family's lives. Recognizing this, many of our community partners have some level of liability protection when performing their job duties in good faith. Schools, law enforcement, District Attorneys and even CASAs have some level of protection. CACs currently do not have any such protections, and therefore our organizations are uniquely vulnerable to lawsuits from many sides. Should a CAC be subject to an extremely costly lawsuit brought by a party who is unhappy with the disposition of the child abuse investigation their family was involved in, whether alleged abuse was founded or unfounded, this can drain our limited resources, severely hampering our ability to provide critical public safety services in a timely manner and at the scale necessary for our communities.

CACs in 19 other states do have some level of liability protections currently. SB 1587 would provide a clear and narrow layer of protection for CACs like KIDS Center. This bill would ensure that an employee of a 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 the assessment, or judicial proceeding resulting from the assessment. The bill ensures immunity would not apply in cases of gross negligence or reckless, wanton, or intentional misconduct. Additionally, the bill makes clear that 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. It is our job as CACs to faithfully follow our best practices and our national standards as we objectively evaluate each child served by our centers.

Reducing the level of risk and legal exposure that CACs currently face for doing our jobs in good faith will help ensure we can dedicate our limited resources to providing

services so we can effectively respond to child abuse cases across Oregon. I hope you will join me in supporting SB 1587 for all these reasons.

Thank you for your time spent evaluating this bill and for your service in our state legislature.

Sincerely,  
Gil Levy  
Executive Director  
KIDS Center  
Bend, Oregon