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To: Senate Committee on Human Services  
From: Lisa Kay Williams, Supervising Attorney

Re: **Support for SB 1557**

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

Founded in 1975, Youth, Rights & Justice is Oregon's only non-profit juvenile public defense firm. Each year, we provide holistic, client-centered representation to hundreds of children, youth, and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system. Additionally, we provide early defense advocacy to keep families together and educational advocacy so children can attend, graduate, and succeed in school. In 2021, we launched our juvenile expunction clinic.

Through our advocacy for Oregon's children, youth, and parents, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems. One glaring systemic problem is that Black, Indigenous, Latinx people and other people of color are overrepresented in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

### **YRJ supports 1557 with amendments.**

In addition to involvement with the juvenile court system, many of the children and youth YRJ represents receive services from Oregon's other child-serving systems. We have seen the benefit to children and youth receiving individualized strength/needs-based services, developed and delivered in collaboration with their families. These children and youth are more likely to live safely and successfully with their families, in their communities.

### The -4 Amendments

The -4 amendments align Section 7 with the understood intent of the bill: to require a determination of a youth's fitness to proceed and a court order within 14 days of receiving an Oregon Health Authority report regarding the provision of restorative services.

The -4 amendments also continue the current law regarding when a youth may be removed from the youth's current placement solely for the purpose of receiving restorative services. This is important to avoid youth languishing in detention while receiving restorative services.

Attorneys have an ethical obligation to assess their clients' fitness to proceed, which may require attorneys to seek an evaluation of their client, paid for by the Oregon Public Defense Commission. Our support of SB 1557 is with the understanding that the changes to ORS 419C.380 are not intended to impact an attorney's ability to fulfill their ethical obligations to clients.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.