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September 26, 2025

Chair Sara Gelser-Blouin,

and members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

I am the author of 6 of the leading books about domestic violence, child abuse, and child custody. Our seventh book will be published shortly with some important new research. I have been qualified as an expert witness regarding domestic violence in 31 states, including Oregon.

There is now a specialized body of scientific knowledge about DV and child abuse but custody court professionals and CPA caseworkers are making their decisions and recommendations without this research. Without the ACE (adverse childhood experiences) Studies from the CDC, the professionals routinely minimize the harm from DV and child abuse. Without Saunders from the US Justice Department, the courts rely on the wrong professionals and routinely disbelieve true reports of abuse. These mistakes all tilt courts in favor of abusers and risk children. We constantly see cases where CPS assumes the court will investigate and the courts assumed CPS investigated, and the precious children fall through the cracks. The heavy caseloads encourage these failures.

As part of the research for our new book, we found that at the start of the DV movement, we made many reforms that made it easier for victims to leave and that resulted in three decades of reduced DV homicides. Abusers didn't like this change and developed especially cruel tactics to manipulate custody courts to regain power and control over their victims. This has made it almost impossible for victims to escape.

As a result, all the gains were reversed, and we now have the highest rate of DV homicides ever.

We often compare the ACE Research to the 1964 Surgeon General's Report linking cancer and smoking. As a society we created many reforms that discouraged smoking and so saved millions of lives and trillions of dollars. ACE offers the same opportunity if we can reduce DV and child abuse. The problem is that the custody courts have been very defensive about justifying their outdated practices and so have not integrated the research that goes to the essence of the wellbeing of children. Similarly, CPA is also not using the research, and the caseworkers do not have the specialized knowledge needed for DV cases. Oregon's children are paying the price for these mistakes.

The other finding is that the US is spending \$3.6 trillion annually to tolerate DV. This comes to \$11,000 per capita. \$2.3 trillion is in health costs and \$1.1 trillion in lost potential which creates a huge brake on our economy. The CDC agreed with these findings when I interviewed them last year. This means the legislature could cut taxes AND provide more services just by reforming the custody courts and CPA to better protect victims of abuse.

There is a lot more information we could share. This is why I want to encourage you to support a Family Court Reform Task Force that includes CPS. This is the best thing you can do for the precious children of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Barry Goldstein