



Klamath-Lake CARES

(Child Abuse Response and Evaluation Services)

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An affiliated program of Sky Lakes Medical Center.

March 17, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Samantha Fenner, and I write on behalf of Klamath-Lake CARES CAC. We urgently request that the Legislature fund Children's Advocacy Centers at Current Service Level this biennium. All 24 Oregon Children's Advocacy Centers, including Klamath-Lake CARES CAC, are facing a significant funding cliff that threatens children's access to the critical services that Children's Advocacy Centers provide.

I urgently request your support of the below funding, which will provide for Current Service Levels for Children's Advocacy Centers:

- **HB 3196- \$18.5M to Backfill Federal Cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA):** Children's Advocacy Centers and other victim's services providers receive federal funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). Following the close of the 2024 Session, Oregon was alerted that this federal funding is being reduced by 42%. **Without your action, projected funding losses range from \$10,000 to \$498,000 per Children's Advocacy Center, with an average loss of \$122,794.**
 - HB 3196 (2025) provides \$18.5M in one-time dollars to backfill the cuts to the current grantees of the VOCA program and provides \$3M for Court Appointed Special Advocates. Children's Advocacy Centers, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs, Campus Sexual Assault Programs, and District Attorney Victims Assistance Programs are all current grantees of the VOCA program and are facing 42% cuts.
- **DOJ POP #327: Stabilizing State Dollars:** The 2021 and 2023 Legislatures allocated \$6M in funding to Children's Advocacy Centers to increase their capacity to serve more children. This funding was successful in increasing capacity, with most CACs using the funds to hire new staff. DOJ POP #327 ensures that this funding, as well as similar funding for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs continues at Current Service Level so that these critical staff and increased capacity can be maintained.

If these funds are not allocated, it will **drastically diminish** the capacity of CACs to provide **essential support**. These potential **cuts** will **leave many child abuse victims** without access to trauma-informed

care and legal advocacy, resulting in **long-term psychological harm** and a **reduced ability** for our **justice system to protect our most vulnerable**.

The **effectiveness of police, prosecution, and child welfare** agencies is closely **tied** to the support provided by Children's Advocacy Centers. These **systems are interdependent**, and the work of **CACs is crucial in ensuring that child abuse cases** are handled **efficiently, effectively**, and with the **best interests of the child in mind**. When **CACs are underfunded**, the **strain is felt across all related systems**, leading to **diminished outcomes for child abuse victims** and **increased burdens** on already stretched resources.

Children's Advocacy Centers are at a critical juncture. Without funding from the Legislature to backfill cuts to federal funding (HB 3196) and Continued Service Level of existing state dollars (DOJ POP #327), we will see reduced staffing, increased wait times, fewer children receiving critical services, and delays in child abuse investigations. **I cannot overstate the urgency of the above funding requests.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Samantha Fenner, MS". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Samantha Fenner, MS
Clinical Manager
Klamath-Lake CARES