

Submitter: Jennifer McCall

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835

I am a pediatrician providing testimony in support of HB 3835, a bill that aims to address critical gaps in behavioral health care for children in Oregon. Over the past decade, Oregon has experienced a devastating decline in essential services for children with behavioral or psychiatric needs:

Oregon has lost 41% of licensed residential facilities, decreasing from 90 facilities in 2014 to just 53 in 2024.

More than half of programs that support foster parents providing specialized behavioral health treatment have closed, dropping from 31 programs in 2014 to only 14 in 2024.

There is significant misunderstanding and mistrust surrounding HB 3835, largely due to historical traumas in child welfare and mental health systems. However, the reality is that vague and inconsistent laws have created an unsafe environment for providers, making it increasingly difficult to find professionals willing to care for this vulnerable population. Many facilities have shut down simply because they cannot hire staff who feel protected and supported in providing care.

HB 3835 seeks to address these issues by clarifying legal standards, ensuring consistency in regulations, and improving access to specialized care. Specifically, it:

Establishes clear and uniform definitions of wrongful restraint and seclusion to eliminate confusion and fear among direct-care providers.

Creates targeted exceptions for out-of-state placements when specialized care is unavailable in Oregon.

Strengthens oversight and accountability to rebuild trust in the system.

Streamlines regulations to ensure qualified providers feel safe and supported in delivering care.

Without decisive action, more facilities will close, and more children will be left without the care they desperately need. I urge you to support HB 3835 and take a necessary step toward stabilizing Oregon's pediatric behavioral health system.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer McCall, DO FAAP  
Pediatrician