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March 25, 2025

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Taryne Roberts, Director of Programs at Jasper Mountain, which is a trauma-informed residential treatment program for children ages 4-13. We have served and want to continue to serve the highest acuity need children in the state, the difficult-to-place children who struggle with multiple failed placements and serious mental health concerns, including violence, sexual reactivity, suicidal ideation, and attachment issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 3835, which would modify the framework established in SB 710. Though well-intentioned, SB 710 has had significant negative implications on our ability to admit and care for children with high needs and has increased the stress and danger faced by our staff, without any corresponding benefit to our children. It is important we care and honor both children and the individuals dedicated to helping them. Under the current guidelines Jasper has made 731 OTIS reports in 2024. These are reported to the hotline, by staff who are involved in caring for the children, participating in interventions, who have a plethora of training. Subsequently, ZERO were found substantiated. Nonetheless, staff turnover rates at Jasper Mountain have increased nearly 35% since SB 710. Injuries to staff have increased with 81 reported staff injuries in 2024: ranging from bites, concussions, broken bones, back and knee injuries, and so on.

We continue to hire and continue to lose staff. Consequently, we are having to deny services and emergency discharge children before they complete treatment; resulting in another failure, another loss, another hardship on children, communities, and the system of care.

The work we do is extensive, and important. Children deserve our best care and as such we need staff who feel supported, are not afraid of the liability of doing their jobs, and collaboration with all levels of people to best serve this at-risk population. We are hopeful HB 3835 will provide some relief to our staff and aid us in serving more children. We will be submitting additional written testimony in support of HB 3835.

Sincerely,

Taryne Roberts M.Ed., QMHP  
Director of Programs, Jasper Mountain