

Testimony in strong opposition to HB 4059

My name is Teresa Soler. I am a resident of Eugene, a mother, and a dedicated advocate for human rights. I see the world not simply as it is, but as it should be, a place where the safety of our most vulnerable children and population is a non-negotiable priority. I am writing today to express my vehement opposition to HB 4059.

While this bill and its subsequent amendments are presented as improvements, they represent a fundamental retreat from proactive child protection. We must refuse to accept a future where "imminent tragedy" is the only permissible trigger for the state to safeguard a child.

The core flaw of this legislation is the codification of what I must call a "catastrophe standard". By narrowing the definition of "threatened harm" to mean only a risk of "severe harm" that is "reasonably likely to occur in the near future," we are setting an impossibly high bar for intervention.

For children with complex medical needs or developmental disabilities, neglect is rarely a sudden explosion; it is a slow, steady, and devastating decline. By the time harm is legally "imminent" and "severe", meaning life-threatening damage or significant acute injury, the window for life-saving, preventative care has often already closed. We cannot demand excellence from our systems while simultaneously moving the goalposts of safety to accommodate departmental workload metrics and staffing models.

The amendments to the central state registry are equally concerning. Changing the reporting standard for investigations from "reasonable cause to believe" to a "preponderance of the evidence" ensures that only the most extreme cases are cataloged. This shift threatens to mask patterns of chronic neglect, leaving vulnerable children in a perpetual state of "inconclusive" safety assessments until the harm becomes "severe" and "imminent".

This Committee must recognize the urgency of this decision. This Act is declared an emergency and is designed to take effect immediately upon passage. The mandate for the Department of Human Services and law enforcement to prepare for these shifts begins the moment this bill is signed.

We cannot allow administrative convenience to dictate the safety of our children. I urge you to vote NO on HB 4059. Let us instead commit to building an Oregon that protects its children before they reach a breaking point.

Respectfully,

Teresa Soler Eugene, Oregon