

My name is Sarah Reardon, and I'm a TTI survivor living in Hillsboro, OR. I'm submitting testimony in STRONG OPPOSITION to HB 4042 as it rolls back basic protections for children in congregate care/long-term stay facilities and weakens the safeguards that exist precisely because children have been harmed when oversight fails.

HB 4042 aims to move Oregon in the wrong direction as it expands the circumstances in which children can be placed in unlicensed settings, including but not limited to settings out of state. When placement is not licensed or closely regulated, children lose crucial protections, and the public will lose accountability. Oregon should reduce risk and increase oversight rather than create new placement pathways.

Where standards are unclear and enforcement is limited, the dangers increase dramatically.

HB 4042 will also run counter to Oregon's commitment to protecting and placing youth in families and communities when safe and possible. The priority should always be family-based care, and support placements should be required to keep these kids connected to safe and stable adults. They should also have access to adequate education and community support resources. The solution should always be to strengthen protections, not loosen them. We need to create and invest in family-based programs that our children desperately need. At 16 years old, I was placed in a lockdown residential treatment facility called Northwest Behavioral Healthcare Services in Gladstone, which has since been shut down due to financial crimes and confirmed allegations of child abuse. I was placed in seclusion upon arrival after being strip-searched without a parent or guardian present. It was not explained to me what was happening, why, or what to expect. I was locked in a room called the Quiet Room, AKA the QR, for several hours, with no way to reach anyone for help. This meant my only hope was to depend on these staff members, who were supposed to take care of me, to come back. I believed these people were supposed to take care of me and keep me safe, but instead, they repeatedly stripped me of my rights and locked me in a room for minor mistakes or rule violations. One time, because I was feeling sick and vomited, and another time, because I sought comfort from a friend via a hug. I witnessed children as young as 12 secluded and often restrained to beds or via chemicals. Oftentimes, these medications were not prescribed to these children and were not administered by appropriately trained medical staff. I had no way to reach out for help or to communicate that anything was wrong. Not only was I physically secluded, but I was also isolated from my support system, including family and friends.

The propositions in HB 4042 are especially alarming because restraint is not a benign intervention. It is traumatizing, and it stays with you for the rest of your life. For some of these kids, it's deadly. It has been almost 21 years since I left NWBHS, but the effects are still with me today. I distrust professionals who are intended to help me, I now fear abandonment and experience anxiety with hypervigilance. The ability to enjoy my life has been negatively affected as I struggle with relationships and a general feeling of fear. Fear that my basic human mistakes and needs will be punished with seclusion or restraint. We NEED policies and training that are consistent statewide, trauma-responsive, and oriented towards prevention and de-escalation, not expanding in ways that make oversight more difficult or allow lower-quality programs to exist and thrive.

Finally, HB 4042 will weaken accountability by removing the clear mandates for ODHS, which require them to take immediate action to suspend or revoke licenses when a child dies from abuse, when abuse is not reported appropriately, and when the agency has failed to cooperate with investigations. There were repeated allegations against the program that I was in regarding

abuse, seclusion, and restraint, yet they were never truly reprimanded. Eventually, their license was suspended, and renewal was denied.

Children will always pay the price when the accountability of those in charge is delayed or even optional. Listening to youth, survivors, families, and advocates can help limit and prevent some of these serious concerns. These vulnerable individuals, such as myself, cannot afford for these laws to go backward regarding safety standards, secure transport, and restraint/seclusion.

These children are deserving of the strongest protections available. If these protections were in place in 2005 myself and countless others would have been spared the trauma that comes from seclusion, restraint, and secure transport.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote NO on HB 4042.

Survivors and children of the future desperately depend on these protections. Trauma does not equal treatment.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to protecting Oregon's children.

Respectfully,
Sarah Reardon
Hillsboro, OR
Northwest Behavioral Healthcare Services survivor