



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

April 5, 2021

Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony on HB 5014

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Sollman, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improving the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

The Department of Justice budget is incredibly important to the stability and well-being of Oregonian families and children. We would like to highlight a few items that are part of the 2021 Children's Agenda, which we believe are essential to fund for the 2021-23 biennium.

Funding for Children's Advocacy Centers (HB 2826) has been a critical but unmet need over the last several years. This concept was part of the 2019 Children's Agenda, a priority on the 2020 Children's Agenda as unfinished business from the 2019 session, and is once again on the 2021 Children's Agenda. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide medical exams, forensic interviews, and follow-up treatment to children who have been victimized, or who were witness to a crime. Lack of access to CACs may result in additional trauma due to children and youth receiving services in emergency rooms or police stations rather than child-friendly settings designed specifically for them. CACs provide that needed space, but unfortunately these centers have never been adequately funded. Increasing funding of \$6 million as outlined in HB 2826 can help more children to receive vital access to quality, comprehensive, child-focused services.

Domestic violence housing navigation and support (SB 271-1 and HB 3327) will continue and increase funding with a \$5 investment to community-based and culturally specific domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) programs to assist survivors with housing needs, and fund prevention services to support survivors at risk of becoming

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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unhoused due to DVSA. This would allow domestic and sexual violence programs across the state to continue to address both the imminent danger of violence and the often-imminent threat of becoming unhoused. In 2019, both the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women and the National Network to End Domestic Violence found housing stability to be the greatest issue and unmet need facing survivors in Oregon. The ongoing crises of the last year have made access to stable housing more difficult for those who are in abusive situations. With the constraints of pandemic restrictions, programs have had to utilize motel stays as safe shelters more than ever before. Without funding to maintain this type of sheltering, advocates are forced to turn survivors away from emergency shelter. Funding for both emergency shelter and steps to achieve permanent housing dramatically changes the ability of community-based and culturally specific DVSA programs to help survivors rebuild their lives free of violence.

Passage of HB 5014 and support for these concepts would help to ensure that children receive the care they need after experiencing trauma and that survivors of DVSA facing housing instability are supported through community-based and culturally specific domestic violence programs. We are grateful to the lawmakers who are prioritizing the health and safety of these important yet underserved members of our community. We urge you to invest in these critical programs in the Department of Justice budget (HB 5014.)

On behalf of the Our Children Oregon team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda