



February 5, 2024

Dear Chair Kropf and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my support of HB 4140, and to thank the committee for your time and attention to this important bill.

I am the director of Children's Center, the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) serving all of Clackamas County. My CAC provides services like forensic exams and child abuse medical assessments, evidence-based child and family therapy, and child abuse prevention education and services to community members. All of our services are offered at no cost to children and families.

HB 4140 is a bipartisan and bicameral bill that adds critical stability to Children's Advocacy Center funding, and makes important new investments that target mental and behavioral health needs.

- **HB 4140, with the forthcoming amendment, will clarify that the increased investment that CACs received in 2021 and 2023 (\$6M) should be considered current service level moving forward.** This funding has been critical to increase capacity at CACs, largely by funding new staff positions. At my CAC, we have been using the funding to increase the number of appointments we have available each week to reduce wait times and see Karly's Law cases within the period required by law. We were also able to hire bilingual medical providers and family advocates. CACs must be able to count on stable funding in order to maintain these important positions.
- **HB 4140 also makes \$5M in new investments to meet the escalating need for services, with a focus on increasing access to mental and behavioral health providers.** We know that real healing happens when children are able to access the life-changing mental health treatment provided by professionals who are trained in child trauma-focused modalities.
- **Plus, the bill includes \$150K for hair drug testing,** a service that DHS asks CACs to provide, but rarely pays for. This means CACs are required to cover this cost through private funding sources. **Perhaps unsurprisingly, the number of hair tests conducted more than doubled from 2021 - 2022.**

If this bill passes, it will ensure access to high quality, timely, and culturally responsive services for the kids and families that we serve.

I respectfully urge your support of the concepts and new funding contained in HB 4140. Your support of these concepts and funding makes tangible differences for the communities and children that we serve.

Karen Rush, PhD
Executive Director