



1375 NW Kingston Avenue, Bend, OR 97703
541.383.5958 | kidscenter.org

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 Executive Director of KIDS Center, the Children's Advocacy Center serving Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Harney, Sherman, and Wheeler Counties. We also provide support to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs community. My CAC provides services like forensic interviews, child abuse medical assessments, ongoing counseling and therapy for children, caregivers, and siblings working to overcome trauma, family advocacy to ensure families impacted by abuse can access whatever resources may be needed, and a wide array of child abuse prevention trainings for community members across our region.

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 ensure we have enough providers to meet the growing need for forensic examinations in our community, and to replace aging forensic recording equipment needed to accurately document the interviews conducted with children. CACs must be able to count on stable funding to maintain these critically important positions and ensure our specialized equipment remains adequate.
- **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.**

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If this bill passes, it will help ensure KIDS Center can meet the growing need for our services. In 2023, we experienced a 17% year-over-year increase in the number of child abuse evaluation services we provided to children in our region, and we project this trend to continue.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "GIL LEVY".

Gil Levy
Executive Director