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February 6, 2024

To: Rep. Jason Kropf,
Rep. Tom Andersen, Vice-Chair
Rep. Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Alison Kelley, JD, CEO 
Liberty House

Re: Support HB 4140

Liberty House urges your support for House Bill 4140, stabilizing funding for Oregon's Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and providing important investments for mental and behavioral health needs. Liberty House is the Children's Advocacy Center serving Marion and Polk Counties, in which an average of 10,500 calls regarding child abuse are made each year to DHS.

HB 4140 has bipartisan and bicameral support adding important support in a targeted and comprehensive manner.

- **HB 4140, with the forthcoming amendment, will clarify that the increased investment that CACs received in 2021 and 2023 (\$6 million) should be considered current service level moving forward.** This funding has been critical to increase capacity at CACs, largely by funding new staff positions. Liberty House used the funds from the 2021 funding measure to support three staff medical providers, our clinic director, our bilingual clinic services specialist, and our bilingual medical interpreter. These staff persons along with the rest of the Liberty House team help make a difference in the lives of children and families of our area when they are at a very vulnerable and traumatic moment in their lives. The funding in HB 4140 will bring necessary continued financial support to Oregon's CACs as we work in our respective regions around the state. CACs must be able to count on stable funding in order to maintain these important positions.
- **HB 4140 also provides \$5 million 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 \$150,000 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.**

For Liberty House, passage of HB 4140 will better stabilize our funding and support us in our mission to provide our essential services for children and families of Marion and Polk Counties who are going through child abuse, neglect, trauma and grief.

I would appreciate 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 in the North Willamette Valley.