

Say yes to Clackamas County Children's Safety Levy

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Measure brings together broad coalition of service providers, business leaders, elected officials, child and family advocates

Take a moment and think about all the adults you encountered throughout your childhood. Do you remember one that was always there for you? One that you trusted? One that showed you they cared through their words and actions? There's a saying that states: "Every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story." The sentiment behind that quote is foundational to the work our organizations do for Clackamas County's families — including our vulnerable children and youth.

The truth is, right here in our communities, we have many trusted nonprofit organizations working hard day in and day out to provide Clackamas County's children and youth with that one adult — giving them a chance to reach their full potential. While no community has yet been able to fully prevent the traumas our children are exposed to, there are already well-established and proven local organizations that work to protect children from violence, abuse and neglect — organizations that could be doing so much more.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, Clackamas County has seen a dramatic increase in children and youth experiencing violence, abuse and neglect. We have no doubt that these numbers will continue to rise in the wake of the wildfires that are still impacting our communities. The facts speak for themselves: the need for increased and solidified support services for vulnerable children and youth has never been greater than in this current moment.

That's why we're joining together with a broad coalition of service providers, business leaders, elected officials, child and family advocates, faith communities and culturally-specific and population-specific providers, as well as people with lived experience of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and trauma experienced as children and youth to say yes on the Clackamas Children's Safety Levy — a measure that will create a dedicated source of funding for crucial services aimed at protecting the county's most vulnerable children and youth.

As organizations working on the ground in Clackamas County, we've seen firsthand that abuse and violence impacting children and youth is a complex and multi-dimensional problem. We can target this problem directly by passing the Clackamas Children's Safety levy — increasing our ability to investigate child abuse and neglect; to provide emergency

shelter, recovery services, legal representation and court-based advocacy services, mental health and addiction treatment; to support parents; to prevent truancy; and to work toward ending cycles of violence, abuse and neglect.

From the day we opened our doors to the community, our organizations have spent almost 170 years combined serving Clackamas County's most vulnerable residents, including our children and youth. We believe that locally-based programs like ours along with other service providers in our coalition are uniquely qualified and appropriately positioned to perform this work. We are asking for your help to make sure we can expand our existing services and meet the growing need our communities face in the wake of overlapping crises. That's why we're asking the voters of Clackamas County to do the right thing for our children and youth by voting yes on Measure 3-564 by Nov. 3.

This opinion article was submitted by executive directors Robin Christian of CASA of Clackamas County; Melissa Erlbaum of Clackamas Women's Services; Simon Fulford of Parrot Creek Child and Family Services; Rose Fuller of Northwest Family Services; and Rebecca Nickels of Children's Center of Clackamas County.
