

# Clackamas County voters weigh property tax to help abused, neglected children

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By [Shane Dixon Kavanaugh](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Voters in Clackamas County will decide in November whether to support a property tax hike to fund increased services for the county's most vulnerable children.

Measure 3-546, also known as the Children's Safety Levy, would raise about \$8 million annually over the next five years to assist young victims of abuse as well as those who are homeless or in the county's foster care system, proponents say.

The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners, which crafted the proposal, unanimously referred it to voters in August, after nearly a decade of discussing a dedicated revenue stream for child services.

There is currently no formal opposition to the measure, which has earned the backing of the county's top elected leaders, law enforcement officials and a coalition of nonprofit and business groups.

"Nobody wants kids to be abused or exposed to violence and neglect," said Simon Fulford, the executive director of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services in Oregon City, which helps kids and parents caught up in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. "Sadly, we're all aware of how prevalent those things are."

If passed, the measure would tax local property owners 15 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value beginning in 2021. That amounts to about \$45 a year on a home with an assessed value of \$300,000.

The county estimates it would raise close to \$40 million over the next five years.

Proponents say that amount could double the number of kids who receive help dealing with domestic violence, sexual exploitation and housing or family instability.

The state of Oregon, through its child welfare division, has the primary responsibility to help children affected by abuse or neglect, including domestic violence, and to provide therapeutic services for foster children. But the failings of that system are well-documented.

The proposal would provide funding for a host of services for Clackamas children and youth by community-based organizations, including medical assessments, emergency

shelters, mental health and addiction treatment, and legal representation.

It would also assist programs that promote violence prevention and parental support.

According to the proposal, a citizen advisory committee appointed by the commissioners would oversee the distribution of money generated by the levy. Only agencies with a proven track record of delivering services in Clackamas County would be eligible to apply for the grant.

Those service providers would also face annual performance and financial audits to increase accountability, according to the proposal.

Among the measure's dozens of public backers are Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts, District Attorney-elect John Wentworth as well as Republican and Democratic state lawmakers. The Clackamas County, Oregon City and Happy Valley business alliances also support it.

A full list of supporters can be [found here](#) and in the [voter's pamphlet](#).

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