

Medical providers endorse Children's Safety Levy

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Cathleen Lang, Gabrielle Petersen, Jennifer Stephens and Christine Smith

Nurse practitioners at the Children's Center of Clackamas County ask voters for support of measure

We know 2020 has been a tough year. Before the pandemic, children went to school, had social outlets, met with outside family members and participated in activities. Similarly, parents went to work and had their own social outlets and events. Due to the pandemic, many children are at home, and families are under stress. Currently, children do not have access to social safety nets, mandated reporters and safe adults. The adults in our community are emotionally, physically and financially stressed, which can lead to more child maltreatment, such as violence in the home, child physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Child abuse and neglect were present before the pandemic. We expect that the current maltreatment that children are enduring is greatly under reported due to the lack of safe, reporting adults in their lives.

Why is this important? Children who experience maltreatment have poor long-term mental health and physical health outcomes. In the short term, children have behavioral and mental health problems. The exposure to maltreatment can actually change how the child is able to learn, socialize, and develop.

What can you do to help? First, if you are worried about a child, please call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline to make a report at 1-855-503-SAFE (7233). You should call if you have any concerns or suspicion that a child is unsafe. Second, support the Clackamas Children's Safety Levy (Measure 3-564). This measure supports locally based community programs that are uniquely qualified and appropriately positioned to ensure our children and families reach their full potential through creating safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments.

As health care providers, we have a duty to promote healing and improve the well-being of everyone in our community, which includes our most vulnerable children. We also know that children need a safe and nurturing environment to focus on being kids and grow into physically healthy adults.

When enacted, the Children's Safety Levy will increase critical support systems for our county's children and youth by allowing proven and trusted local nonprofit organizations to provide: trauma informed intervention; treatment and support services designed to

mitigate the impacts of trauma; interventions that interrupt the cycle of violence, abuse and neglect; individualized crisis intervention and long-term support; and services that promote stabilization, address health needs, and enhance opportunities for well-being.

Oregon has been a leader in childhood health. We want to continue that legacy by creating a funding stream accessible to those providers working in our communities. Please join us and our growing coalition of service providers, business leaders, elected officials, 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. With our collective knowledge and experiences, we can meaningfully address the critical need for intervention and support services that exist in Clackamas County. By passing the Clackamas Children's Safety Levy (Measure 3-564), we can take a huge step in that direction.

Join us in voting yes for Clackamas kids by Nov. 3.

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