



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: March 23, 2021

TO: Honorable Representative Janelle Bynum, Chair
Representatives Noble and Power, Vice Chairs, and
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: James Unger, MD, MPH, FAAP
Oregon Pediatric Society Member

SUBJECT: Support for HB 3265 - Strengthening Oregon's Sanctuary Law

The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS) is the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Our membership is committed to improving and protecting the health and well-being of all children in Oregon, as well as their families. My name is Jimmy Unger, and I am a Pediatrician and co-chair of the OPS Advocacy Committee. I am writing to request your support for HB 3265, which the OPS board of directors also endorses.

In 1987, the Oregon Legislature boldly and nearly unanimously (with a total of 4 “No” votes from both chambers) passed legislation (ORS 181A.120) which became known as Oregon’s Sanctuary Law. Nearly 30 years later, Oregon voters overwhelmingly voted against attempts to roll back this policy by defeating Ballot Measure 105. (OPS’s statement opposing Measure 105 was included in the state’s fall 2018 voter’s pamphlet). The time to debate whether Oregon is to be a sanctuary state has long passed. The Legislature and the people have made it clear where we, as a state, stand.

HB3265 clearly defines Oregon’s sanctuary law, giving it some much-needed teeth and, in so doing, protects the rights of many Oregon children.

I can use my experience as a Pediatrician to illuminate the chilling, harmful impact of the ever-looming threats to well-being that many of my patients with immigrant parents must endure. Eight-year-old Rodrigo (not his real name) came to see me for evaluation of possible attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As a second grader, he was doing very poorly at school, exhibiting many of the behaviors typical of ADHD: inability to sit still, inattentiveness, disruptive classroom behavior, and impulsivity. What did not fit the ADHD diagnosis was the timing of the onset of his symptoms. He had been an exemplary student as a kindergartener and first grader. Kids do not suddenly develop ADHD in second grade. Something had changed him – it became clear to me it was stress and grief stemming from the loss of his father. His Dad had been rounded up, was being held in Tacoma, and was facing deportation for something that I later learned was a minor infraction. My suggestion that the family Skype with Dad so that father and children could connect with each other had already been considered and rejected. Dad, despite his intense love of his kids, could not face the indignity of his children seeing him incarcerated, in prison garb.

I wrote a letter on behalf of the family attesting to the fact that Rodrigo’s recent behavioral symptoms were a direct result of the trauma from the recent family separation. Shortly after my



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letter, a judge released Rodrigo's Dad back to his family. Unsurprisingly, weeks later, I learned that Rodrigo was back to his "old self" – once again on a path to being a successful student and kid. (At the same time, his 13-year-old sister's debilitating migraine headaches had also been "cured").

I urge you to preserve Oregon's status as a sanctuary state and pass HB3265, so that other children like Rodrigo can live a childhood unburdened by similar trauma.

Thank you for your consideration and public service,