



March 18, 2014

School Funding Task Force,

I am the VP of Clinical Services at LifeWorks NW. LifeWorks NW is one of the largest providers of mental health, addiction, and prevention services in Oregon. We operate three Psychiatric Day Treatment Programs serving children, youth, and families residing in Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas counties. We have been providing day treatment services for over 25 years. Day Treatment is an integral part of a full range of services we provide that allow children and youth to remain in their homes and living in the community.

Education services for these children and youth are fully integrated into Day Treatment Services. Although clients are primarily referred due to emotional and behavioral problems these are usually intertwined and overlap with academic challenges. Academic outcomes are equally important to their clinical outcomes.

We need your support to ensure adequate and equitable funding for some of the most complex and vulnerable children and youth from Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas County being served in our day treatment programs

We need appropriate funding that is closer to the costs of providing services. We provide year round mental health treatment for these youth because without it they do not achieve their treatment targets and frequently regress requiring residential care or hospitalization.

We need our educational programming to be year round as well to ensure these children and youth are making equal progress in their academic development. Most have histories of academic problems and failure. Most of these children are behind in acquiring necessary academic skills that ensure long term success in school and in the community. The Day Treatment Programs need a funding formula that provides adequate educational services.

It is patently unfair for 99% of children in Oregon to see their education spending increase by almost 14% in a single biennium, while the other 1%, who are disproportionately children of color and poverty, watch from the sidelines with barely a 1% increase in overall funding (and in reality, many actually saw their funding decrease because of an administrative "holdback" by the Department). We can no longer accept this discriminatory type of system in our state.

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The current LTCT funding formula is arbitrary, inequitable and wholly inadequate. It is not cost-based and bears little resemblance to the overall K-12 funding model.

We need your help in moving these children into the State School Funding formula to more closely mirror the education funding formulas already in place under the State School Fund (how funds are distributed to school districts).

We hope you will help Oregon's treatment and educational funding find the appropriate balance to ensure flexible, efficient, and stable integrated therapeutic and educational services for the highest need children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Lewinsohn, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Mark Lewinsohn, Ph.D.
Vice President of Clinical Services
LifeWorks NW