



CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON FOR LINCOLN COUNTY
Seventeenth Judicial District
225 West Olive Street, P O Box 100, Newport, OR 97365

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Dear prospective board members,

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Citizen Review Board. A dedicated CRB can have a substantial impact on the community in which they serve as well as the juvenile dependency system as a whole.

In my opinion, juvenile dependency cases are the most important cases that come before the circuit court. The way in which children's cases are handled, their experiences in foster care, and the amount of time they spend in foster care impact them far into their adulthood. Their experiences while in state care can impact their stability in the community, their mental health, their future involvement with the criminal system, and their own parenting choices. In addition, the way the "system" treats and helps the parents in these cases can truly change their life direction. I see and hear about the impact of these experiences almost every day in criminal cases, delinquency cases, custody cases and mental health treatment court.

Despite their importance, the court only has so much time to review dependency cases. There is simply no way I, nor I expect any other circuit court judge, could ever do the type of in-depth review that the CRB does. I have seen CRB reviews bring to light serious issues in a case that a normal review hearing would have missed. I have also observed negative findings in a CRB review lead directly to positive changes in a child's case.

It is truly remarkable that the CRB functions on the work of volunteers and I cannot thank you enough for taking this step. It will be heartbreaking at times to review these cases and it will also be difficult to feel as if you are reviewing the work of well-intentioned and hard-working caseworkers. However, the CRB is one of the most effective tools we have to identify shortcomings in the foster care system and to determine where improvements must be made. You will play a significant role in the lives of children and families and your work will help us all continue to improve our foster care system.

Thank you,

Amanda Benjamin
Circuit Court Judge