

Dear Ms. Craig,

I will not be able to attend the hearing this afternoon on SB 570. Please enter the following statement into the record:

My name is John Charles. I live in unincorporated Clackamas County near Sandy. I was a licensed foster parent in Oregon from 1986-1991. During that period we had 6 foster children live with us for various period of time, ages 6-10. One of them never returned home, and after two years with us, the court terminated parental rights of his parents. My wife and I were asked to adopt him, which we did in 1989, when he was 9.

We enjoyed our time as foster parents and I will always regard it as one of the best experiences of my life. However, we always considered ourselves volunteers. The notion, expressed in SB 570, that foster parents are "public employees", is stunning.

Perhaps the advocates of this bill assume that because foster parents receive a check from the state, they are employees of the state. That is incorrect. The money foster parents is a stipend to help pay for the living expenses of the child. We did not make money on the transaction. We also did not keep a log of "hours worked", since being a parent is a round-the-clock responsibility. Forcing foster parents to pay union dues from a non-existent paycheck would be insulting.

Foster parenting is a noble undertaking, and the state needs more people to volunteer. Please do not degrade the experience by classifying foster parents as "employees" of the state.