

Catholic Community Services

A Forever Home for Everyone

Senator Bates, Representative Nathanson, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Juan Manuel. I am here to testify in support of HB 3445.

I am 21 years old and my life has already taken many twists and turns. I entered foster care at age three and most of my childhood memories are not happy ones. After struggling to make things work out with my family and bouncing around from too many fosters homes to count, I bottomed out. I started to believe that no one would ever care about me.

That all started to change though when I went to live at my Community Homes. My Community Home foster dad was both my greatest support and my inspiration. He was the one that was always there when I needed him. For example, he would leave inspirational quotes on the dry erase board for us to read every day. Then when we came home from school, he would ask "How did you apply that thought to your life today?" The bottom line was, he cared. We were number one in his life, and he wanted us to go far and fulfill our lives to the fullest extent.

I graduated from North Salem High School in 2010 with a great GPA and received a music scholarship to attend Oregon State University. I was the first person in my family to achieve this level of success. It was challenging for me to go from such a safe, nurturing home though, to being out on my own at OSU. To put in simply, I crashed at OSU. I would have crashed and burned if it were not for the Community Home promise that they would never give up on me. It was hard for me to swallow my pride and ask for help but as soon as I did, I knew everything would be okay.

At the Community Home they have what they call the "Iron Rule". It means they won't do anything for you that you can and should do for yourself but they are always there to make sure you have a safe, stable, nurturing home to work from. Knowing I have support that is similar to what any other young person who is trying to get out on their own gets from their families makes me stronger and grateful.

I know a lot of foster youth who aged out of the system and became homeless or ended up in jail because they didn't have the opportunities that I have had. Community Homes work and HB 3445 will give more youth the opportunity to live responsibly in a safe, stable, nurturing home they can call their own and the support they need to get out on their own. I urge you to support it. Thank you.

ccswv.org

3737 Portland Rd. NE, Salem | P.O. Box 20400, Salem, OR 97307 | 503-390-2600 | A 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organization

Fostering Hope Initiative

www.FosteringHopeInitiative.org
Lead Partner



Nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children & Family Services,
Behavioral Health Services, and Group Living Services



A Member Agency
Catholic Charities of Oregon
Catholic Charities USA