



Oregon
Foster Youth
CONNECTION

MEASURE: SB 123
EXHIBIT: 10
S. HEALTHCARE & HUMAN SERVICES
DATE: 3/21/13 PAGES: 1
SUBMITTED BY: Deedee Hartley

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Deedee Hartley. I am twenty-two years old and I currently live in southwest Portland. I am an active member of Oregon Foster Youth Connection's Tri-County chapter. I have come here on behalf of the Oregon Foster Youth Connection to testify for the passage of SB123. I grew up in foster care and spent 20 years in the system. I attended four elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools.

During my time spent in foster care, I had a general sense of my rights and knew when my rights were being violated. The problem was I didn't know the process of reporting abuse that shouldn't have been happening to me. So long as a judge does not prohibit it, foster youth have the right to see their siblings while they are in care. In both my sister and I's case, the judge never mandated that we couldn't see each other and yet we weren't able to see each other for more than 3 years. This break in our relationship really hurt us. Being separated from your parents is hard enough and on top of that, being separated from the rest of your biological family was really devastating.

As wards of the state of Oregon we depend on your support to nurture us through the turmoil of our childhoods. If we were your biological children we would depend on your support for the rest of our lives, but we are not that lucky. We are the children of Oregon, and as your children, we are asking for your help. If you have biological children of your own, here are a couple questions for you to consider: Do you want your children to have all of their needs met? Do you wish for your children to live in a clean and safe environment? Do you want them to know they have somewhere to turn if they are getting hurt? Don't you want your children to be able to grow up with their siblings?

We, the foster children of Oregon, your children, have these rights as well but they are far too often violated and when they are violated, we do not have anywhere to turn. We depend on our parents, which are the legislators of Oregon to get what we need. Passing SB 123 will allow us to have a better life and future.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Deedee Hartley