

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

To: House Committee On Human Services and Housing, 2015 Oregon Legislature

From: Mark McKechnie, Executive Director, Youth, Rights & Justice

Date: March 16, 2015

Re: Support for HB 2890 – Extracurricular Activities for Children and Youth in Foster Care

Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

Youth, Rights & Justice was founded 40 years ago and has been dedicated to providing legal representation and advocacy to over 50,000 children and youth involved in the juvenile court system, including children in foster care and youth in the juvenile justice system. YRJ has also worked extensively with the Legislature, the Oregon Law Commission, various state agencies and other organizations to improve policies and services to the children of Oregon during that time.

YRJ supports HB 2890 to help ensure that children and youth in foster care have access to the same kinds of experiences and opportunities that we want and try to provide for our own children. For many of us, experiences playing sports, hiking and camping, learning an instrument, learning an art or new skill, or engaging in clubs and organizations with our peers were critical, formative experiences. These experiences helped us to develop physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Foster youth are too often denied these types of experiences.

When the State takes responsibility for a child's safety, it must also take responsibility for the child's well-being and development. HB 2890 is a simple and important step toward recognizing the fact that youth in foster care have the same needs and desires as all youth and that they deserve the same opportunities, as well.

Youth, Rights & Justice urges your support of HB 2890.