



Oregon Foster Youth CONNECTION

Improving the Oregon foster care system through advocacy, activism and leadership.

Testimony in Support of HB 2889 & HB 2890
Human Services and Housing Committee
March 16, 2015

Hello, my name is Alexis Baska; I am 18 years old, and a senior at Vernonia High School. I entered into the foster care system three years ago, at the age of 15. Before entering into the foster care system I never knew it existed, I couldn't even imagine not living with at least one of my parents. I'd lived with my mother, father, or a grandparent my entire life.

As a freshman in high school my whole world got turned upside down. My mother was struggling with addiction, my father died very suddenly, and I was taken from my home. However, I am one of the lucky ones. I was placed with my aunt and uncle in the same town, going to the same school, surrounded by the same people. Even though my aunt and uncle were close to strangers to me, I knew I was in a safe and loving environment.

Something I quickly realized is that you'll always have a certain place in your heart for your parents, no matter how much they've put you through. After my father died, I felt the need to protect my mother and ensure that she'd continue to live. I became both stressed and depressed.

I knew that I needed something to help me get through my challenges or I'd shutdown. I put all I had into extracurricular activities and found that it helped immensely. I learned more about myself in a few short months than I had in my 15 years of life. My foster mom and case worker both encouraged my participation in extracurricular activities and expressed how impressed they were by me. Because I was at the same school it was easy to stay involved even after entering care. It was something that I could have without worrying about it being taken away from me. I came to realize I love helping others, being a leader, and standing up for what I believe in. Because of my activities, I have a plan of what I intend to do after I graduate in May.

Today we are presenting two House Bills, one of them being HB 2890. HB 2890 ensures that all foster youth in Oregon can have the same opportunity to partake in extracurricular activities that I have. Without your help and support of passing this bill, many youth in foster care will suffer in countless ways.

Thank you for your time,

Alexis Baska