

Alyssa Leslie (Sutton)

Public Testimony Script

POLS 350

Chair Roblan and members of the committee, for the record my name is Alyssa Leslie (Sutton). I am submitting this written testimony concerning Senate Bill 551. While I strongly support the principles of Senate Bill 551, I feel it could have better success if it included a process to integrate high school foster children who have just aged-out of the system, into higher education. The main focus of Senate Bill 551 is the implementation of pilot programs that will assist foster children transitioning from a community college, to that of a university. I would like to bring to your attention the concept of the “Passport for Foster Youth Program” that was implemented in the state of Washington in 2007, as it would provide additional support to the current bill. The three primary components of the Passport, developed by the Washington Student Achievement Council, include student scholarships outside of state, federal and institutional aid, campus funding that helps campus staff support and retain students, and finally a partnership with a College Success Foundation to provide additional student intervention and retention services to foster youth and training and technical assistance to campus staff. The implementation of this type of program could raise the higher education attendance of foster children from less than five percent, to roughly 19 percent in Oregon, in just one fiscal year. While this may require the creation of an entirely new bill, I think it would be something worth pursuing for the success of the foster children of Oregon who wish to complete a college degree.

If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them. Thank you.