

## Testimony in Support of SB 395 Senate Committee on Education

May 16, 2017

Chair Roblan, members of the committee,

My name is Alyssa Leslie (Sutton), I just received my Bachelor's of Science from Eastern Oregon University and was a product of the Oregon foster system.

While I did not "age out" of the Oregon foster system, before being adopted, I was on my own in terms of living, education and financial responsibility upon the completion of high school. This made it even more difficult for me to obtain tuition assistance, as I legally was a dependent. As my siblings, whom also spent various amounts of time in foster care, began to graduate, I began to research how they would all integrate into college. Of us nine children, only one other has completed a four year degree, while I will continue to pursue a law degree. The other four that are of college-age, made the decision not to attend college. This was due in part to financial instability, but mostly due to the lack of resources both in high school and upon graduation.

According to the most updated statistics there are currently over 12,000 children in Oregon's foster system. While some of them will be adopted or placed back in the care of biological family members, many will age out of the system. Of the large number of children that age out, according to the most updated information, less than four percent of them will complete a two-year degree, while just two percent of them will complete a four-year degree. Senate Bill 395 would allow for the State to procure more precise percentages to better assist higher education prepare for the success of former foster youth.

I strongly support the passing of Senate Bill 395, as it would begin to pave the path to create a higher success rate for foster youth's success within higher education.

Alyssa Leslie (Sutton)