

Sara Ashmore
6/13/17
HB 2830

My name is Sara Ashmore, I live and work in Gresham, Oregon. I'd like to thank Speaker Kotek and Senator Hass for your work on this revenue plan.

I am here today because I care deeply about Child Welfare. I'm very concerned that because corporations pay so little in taxes in Oregon, we are going to have to make cuts to an already overburdened child welfare system. I hope you will continue to put Oregon's most vulnerable first.

The bill you are considering is a positive step and I support it, but the children and families we serve, deserve far more and I hope the legislature will pass a tax increase that will be able to make a meaningful difference to Oregon's children in care.

For the children and families I serve, more cuts would be devastating. I work in permanency with adolescents, many of whom have in the foster care system for years. I work with children that become victims of sex trafficking, youth that run away, or otherwise have challenging behaviors due to their on-going trauma. I am working with a youth that has been in care for more than six years in over twenty placements after being removed due to unthinkable physical abuse and neglect. This youth was on the run for nearly a year. When they returned, we had no placement. Referrals were turned down by every therapeutic, BRS, and residential program we have in the state.

My job is to support this youth into successful adulthood. Without placement and stability I cannot put in place the supportive services necessary for this child to heal from years of abuse. I was able to establish a positive relationship with this youth, however, after weeks of waiting, they gave up again. Part of the healing for our kids can be a consistent, honest, relationship with their caseworker. However, with caseloads more than four and in many cases five times what is considered manageable. We go to sleep thinking about our kids, wake up thinking about them, miss breaks, vacations, times with our own families because there are too many kids with too great of needs.

We can't keep piecing together budgets like this. We need a revenue package that is significant and reverses decades of disinvestment in our schools and child welfare services. I'm urging you not just to raise new revenue, but to raise game-changing revenue that makes a significant difference.

Child welfare workers and the children and families we serve are counting on you. Thank you for your time