

January 30, 2017

Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair Sen. Sara Gelser
Co-Vice-Chair Sen. Alan Olsen
Members:

 Sen. Michael Dembrow
 Sen. Tim Knopp
 Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson

RE: Testimony on SB-243

Dear Senator Gelser and committee members,

My name is Don Darland and my wife and I have been foster parents for over 25 years. I am also very active in advocating for foster, relative and adoptive parents throughout the state of Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony. I know that you all are very concerned about the safety and well being of Oregon's most vulnerable children. You also are concerned about the current status of the numbers of foster homes in the state.

Having been involved with SB 1515 I knew that this session would add regular foster care to these definitions. Of course I was hoping I would be wrong.

With that said, let me be brief and point out just two unintended consequences that WILL take place over time upon passing this legislation, which I'm sure that it will.

1. In time, you will lose more regular foster parents because of the increase in abuse allegations based on the process of being accused of abusing a child, even if it is unfounded.
2. DHS will have a much harder time recruiting foster parents because of the increased risk of being accused of abuse.

Here are just a few of the issues:

1. Define "Involuntary Seclusion". What if a child is raging to the point that they need to go to their room(door open) to calm down?. This is a very common accepted trained practice within child welfare. They are technically secluded involuntarily for their protection and other children's protection. YOU NOW COULD BE ACCUSED OF ABUSE.
2. Then, these two definitions are very arbitrary and are subject to many different opinions. Actions by well meaning but ill informed people can automatically trigger an investigation without merit. Thus putting a family through a very intense experience.

(b) "Financial exploitation" does not include age-appropriate discipline that may involve the threat to withhold, or the withholding of, privileges.

[(6)] (8) "Intimidation" means compelling or deterring conduct by threat. "Intimidation" does not include age-appropriate discipline that may involve the threat to withhold privileges.

In my 25+ years of experience and helping providers through 100's of abuse allegations, I have witnessed many examples of different opinions of "age-appropriate" parenting, privileges and consequences that turned into CPS investigations. Many times resulting in unnecessarily moving a child and a foster parent quitting because of the experience.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Don Darland
503.394.2305
ability@smt-net.com