

To the honorable House Committee,

I support the passage of bill HB 2401 that requires the Department of Human Services and Department of Justice to provide trauma-informed training and curriculum to child welfare personnel.

From 1994 to 2013, I lived in foster care for more than 9 years of my life as a minor. Changing back and forth between adoption, foster care, and respite care had negative impacts on my physical, and mental development as well as my education. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, isolation and domestic violence while in and out of Foster care brought about Post Traumatic Stress disorder all throughout my early childhood and adolescence. Personally, PTSD manifested itself as difficulties in social interaction and academics. I often had trouble concentrating, engaging in activities, and I experienced constant anxiety and depression, of which I was medically diagnosed. Without DHS advocating and recognizing what I was undergoing, decisions were in the hands of teachers, parents, case-workers, and doctors who did not understand I should be cared for, and not punished or dismissed. If an authority figure yelled at me instead of recognizing my coping mechanism to trauma, it would only make me feel more vulnerable and unsafe.

Currently, I volunteer as a mentor for Holla, a school-based mentorship program that works with administrators, teachers, social agencies and families to serve kids of color at several schools in Portland. Some of us, including myself, serve youth of all backgrounds in the Department of Human Services.

We have recently received training in identifying trauma by the representative from Metropolitan Family Services. The goal was to learn how to make informed responses and interact with our mentees in the appropriate way when they are showing signs of experiencing trauma.

Online, research by ABA Center on Children and the Law states: “children entering the foster care system are more likely to be victims of complex trauma and polyvictimization.”

Since prolonged stress is generally believed to pose negative health effects such as cancer and heart disease, I can think of no better policy than to implement trauma informed training.

Any effort that builds the level of trust and the holistic health of children who have endured traumatic experiences makes a difference. As an organization that is responsible for the welfare of youth in custody of the state, understanding and utilizing the trauma-based training is paramount to understanding what we endure and the future consequences.

Thank you for continuing to serve my home city of Portland,

Sincerely,

Emily Wintringham.

