
*D*ouble J. Consultant Services



February 13, 2018

The Honorable Representative Jeff Barker, Chair
The Honorable Representative Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Representative Andy Olson, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary, Members

RE: HOUSE BILL 4009-Testimony in Support

Dear Chair Barker, Vice Chairs Williamson and Olson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Julianne Cullen and I have worked with parents in the child welfare system for over 10 years in rural northwest Oregon. I fully support HOUSE BILL 4009. In my experience with helping families in the system as a parent educator and supervised visitation monitor for judges in my county, I've witnessed not only overrepresented families of color, but also those in poverty. Court appointed attorneys do the best they can with the many cases they receive but, it is not the same as a parent with the means to hire an attorney. This bill will allow the Governor's recommendation of preventive as a family-preservation system to actually work as intended. For example, removing an infant from the hospital after birth without any reason other than an unacceptably long open case, and no court order does more lasting emotional harm than good.

With our current knowledge of brain development and trauma informed care we must do things differently within the child welfare system. Without securing a protective custody order from a judge, case workers will not be as informed as to what family members could foster the child first, instead of looking at possibilities after the fact and the child is moved yet again. This bill would also allow judges to make decisions that may involve the he said-she said in current divorce/parenting plan cases, which I also see many accusations and falsehoods during custody cases. Child Welfare is not always aware, but the family court system is aware of a current case and perhaps can shed light on rationale decision making in these cases.

The most recent Child Welfare audit only shined light on some of the issues in this system, certainly not all. This is a first step to protecting our children from a system in dire need of a reboot. We've had so many new Child Welfare staff in our region, but that does not change the culture of a broken system, and not all of them left from large caseloads. Has anyone done exit interviews with the staff turnover? I believe you would uncover far more problems than solutions to family preservation. I urge your yes vote on HOUSE BILL 4009.

Sincerely,

Julianne Cullen

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HELPING GIVE JOY BACK TO CHILDREN

Julianne Cullen M.S.