



February 20, 2018

Senate Committee on Human Services
State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Gelser and Senators,

Re: 4014

Children First represents the interests of Oregon's 880,000 children and believes that together, with communities and leaders across the state, we can build a state where all children thrive. One Children First program is Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC). OFYC empowers foster youth to share their voice and to be heard in key decisions affecting all children and youth in foster care.

In 2010, OFYC youth developed a proposal that was introduced in the 2011 session to request tuition waivers at Oregon public universities and community colleges. This idea became HB 3471 and it passed with large bipartisan majorities in each chamber.

During the 2011 legislative process, in an additional effort to help foster youth move along their educational path, a volunteer requirement was added to HB 3417. By requiring volunteer hours to receive the tuition waiver, the idea was for foster youth to provide mentorship to other foster youth through programs developed at their campus. However, these foster youth support programs have only been established at two Oregon campuses, making the laudable goal of allowing foster youth to mentor incoming foster youth impossible for most youth.

HB 4014 removes this unnecessary barrier for foster youth seeking to further their education and removes the volunteer requirement. While the original goal to allow foster youth to mentor each other was admirable, this goal is impossible for most youth since adults failed to create the mentorships programs as originally envisioned.

We ask for your support of HB 4014.

Sincerely,

James Barta
Strategic Director