

**Presentation to the
Subcommittee on Human Services
February 5, 2019**

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chair Noble & Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about HB 2033.

My name is Charity Haskins. I am mother and in my professional career work with vulnerable Protected Persons.

While I am new to working with Protected Persons (3 ½ years now), I'm not new to parenting. I am 40 years old and have two boys ages 16 and 6. I am a single parent who graduated summa cum laude in January 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Human Services with an emphasis in Child Welfare & Family, and a minor in Legal Studies.

I have had several interactions with Child Welfare as a mandatory reporter in the State of Nevada and Klamath County, Oregon, with concerns I had with children. In my personal life I have had interactions with the Child Welfare Department in Polk County, Oregon.

In all instances the communications and interactions I had with Child Welfare workers there were actions and vocabulary that were less than professional.

My most recent and only personal experience with Child Welfare was November 2016-February 2017, in Polk County Oregon. I will not go into details that are not relevant to this discussion, however, it should be noted that the amount of human dignity extended to me was less than acceptable.

The Child Welfare worker neglected to include emails and communications in her written assessment that had substantial impact on the details of the interactions she had with myself and my children. There were opinions stated as facts and crucial information left out which painted a very different picture than what had really happened in several instances. Luckily the Polk County and City of Dallas Police Officers were factual and thorough in their documentation of in reports. In all reports it was clear that there were no concerns of me and my parenting, however, the child welfare workers written assessment documented conflicting information. In the child welfare workers assessment, she also failed to document the many times I had asked her for help in dealing with my teenager who was out of control.

Ultimately, everything was unsubstantiated for abuse and/or neglect, however, I was taken to court by both of the fathers of my children; both in 2017/2018 due to what the child welfare had written in her assessment. The child welfare worker testified, under oath, that Child Welfare was prepared to take custody of my children. It has taken me two years but I finally got it in writing from the Director of Polk County Child Welfare that they in fact had absolutely no intentions of removing custody and had no understanding of why the child welfare worker would have testified to that.

As you can imagine, this has had a huge impact on myself and my children. I kept custody despite what the child welfare testified and plan to continue to advocate that there be some sort of actions to correct this situation. I fear how much worse this could have been had the worker not had any formal education at all.

The reason I share this with you is because of my concern with who the next child welfare worker will be in that type of position. It is my shared opinion with many others that there is a lack of education and oversight to Child Welfare worker actions. If one is to do a formal complaint it is investigated by DHS as well. It terrifies me that someone with no education on the cultural backgrounds of the following demographics could be responsible for the removal of children from their homes.

- Single Parents
- Disabled veterans
- Student Parents
- Rural
- LGBT
- Minority
- Tribal
- Homeless

In my education experience there were many classes on confidentiality, mandatory reporting, cultural competency, adolescent development and realistic expectations of adolescents at different ages. With the growing epidemic of mental health and homelessness, someone without an education will lack the basic skills to understand what it is they are encountering and could make some detrimental “observations” that could grossly impact many lives, especially the lives of those that they are put in place to protect.

Without the educational experience I question whether or not the child welfare workers would be able to properly understand and interpret signs that are easily missed and the importance of documentation.

Please, members of the board, as a parent who cares greatly for children and vulnerable populations, I respectfully beg of you to vote no on HB 2033. It is imperative that people with the power to impact families this substantially have education requirements. Thank you for your time.