

Good morning Co-Chair Nosse, Co-Chair Beyer, and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Jackie Yerby. I serve as the Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for Basic Rights Oregon.

Basic Rights Oregon is a member of the Foster Homes of Healing Coalition, and I am here today to express our support for expanding supports for foster parents through programs like KEEP and Treatment Foster Care Oregon..



Nationwide LGBTQ youth and youth of color are overrepresented in the foster care system. LGBTQ youth enter the foster care system for many of the same reasons as non-LGBTQ youth, but oftentimes LGBTQ youth have significant trauma associated with family rejection or violence due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Anytime the child welfare system experiences a shortage of foster parents, it exacerbates the difficulties of placing LGBTQ youth and youth of color in an optimum setting with an affirming family. Just like all young people in foster care, LGBTQ youth need the support of a nurturing family which requires acceptance and understanding of their identity. Oregon must build a foster care system that is equipped to meet the needs of all foster children including LGBTQ youth.

Trauma informed, evidence based, community delivered training and support services for foster parents help all foster children. KEEP helps to retain our best foster parents, recruit new foster parents, and support foster families to maintain the placements of youth in their care which reduces secondary trauma and affirms the child in care.

In the recent KEEP pilot program, foster children in non-KEEP, control-group, families were sixty percent more likely to experience a placement move than the kids with foster parents in KEEP. These are the kind of dramatic improvements we need to see in Oregon's foster care system.

Oregon's kids deserve foster parents who are supported, valued and trained who in turn will support and value the children in their care, regardless of how the child identifies.

Oregon needs a foster parent retention strategy and KEEP is it.

Thank you,
Jackie Yerby
BRO, Member of Foster Homes of Healing Coalition