

3/4/2019

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, and Members of the Committee,

Re: SB 745

My name is Andrew Grover and I am the Executive Director of Youth Villages Oregon. Our organization is committed to helping children, families, and young adults overcome life's most difficult challenges and ultimately live successfully. Many of the young adults aging out of Oregon's foster care system are especially vulnerable and need on-going support to avoid negative outcomes and achieve their full potential.

Learning to live independently as an adult is a challenge for any young person. But for youth growing up in foster care, the path toward adulthood and independent living can be filled with more obstacles and detours than the typical young person faces.

All young people need to learn how to budget, obtain a driver's license, successfully complete high school, rent their first apartment, find employment, apply to college, and more. But many foster youth are moved multiple times while in foster care — over half of all youth in care in Oregon experience more than 3 placements. This instability makes it difficult for foster families to teach these necessary skills to youth. Moreover, 3 out of 4 young people in Oregon age out of foster care without being reunited or connected to a family. These youth lack critical supports that can make the difference between finding an apartment or not having a home to sleep in at night.

Children in foster care are our children — it's our responsibility to help them learn the skills needed to succeed as adults. That's why we support SB 745. This bill would expand transition services so that all youth in care get the support they need to live independently.

SB 745 invests in Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP) — a key resource for gaining the skills all young adults need. ILP workers are sometimes the only people who take the time to teach youth in care the complicated steps of budgeting, applying for a job, and looking for housing. Youth also have the opportunity to build a network of support in this program, something that is difficult to come by for many foster youth. If passed as amended, SB 745 would also increase the age for eligibility for ILP from 16-21 to 14-23, allowing more youth to be served.

It's time to ensure that all foster youth in Oregon are prepared to transition out of foster care and become successful adults. For these reasons, Youth Villages Oregon urges your support of SB 745.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this legislation.



Andrew Grover, MPH
Youth Villages Oregon