



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 2019
TO: Senate Committee on Human Services
FROM: Roberta Dunn, FACT Oregon
RE: SB 745

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

My name is Roberta Dunn, and I am the Executive Director of FACT Oregon. I am writing to provide testimony in support of **SB 745**, which expands independent living program services.

FACT Oregon's mission is to empower Oregon families experiencing disability in pursuit of whole lives in their community. We do this with focused work in three interconnected areas: expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families. Through services created "by families for families," we have helped thousands of families each year navigate barriers, create a culture of inclusion, and demonstrate that a whole life is possible. The outcome of our work is families with high expectations for their child and a vision for the future where all communities are accessible, welcoming, and embrace that disability is natural.

Our work with Oregon families has given us the opportunity work with many foster families and foster children. We know from this experience that students who have spent time in the foster care system generally have additional barriers and challenges to overcome, not only in accessing their education but also in successfully transitioning to adulthood and independent living.

We support SB 745 because this bill would expand transition services by investing in Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP), which is a key resource for helping young adults gain the support and skills they need to live independently.

We also support the proposed amendment to SB 745 that would expand the age range for eligibility for ILP to ages 14 to 23, which would allow more youth to be

served for a longer period and starting at an earlier age.

While transition planning for students receiving special education services must begin no later than age 16, it is generally regarded as best practice to begin transition services at age 14 (or even earlier), in order to allow as much time as possible to help these students build the skills they will need to be successful as they become adults.

Similarly, for foster youth or other disadvantaged student populations that face barriers or obstacles that a typical young person might not face, it only makes sense to begin the transition planning process, which is very involved and highly individualized, as soon as possible. Providing transition services to foster youth in Oregon at an earlier age, and investing additional resources in these services, will help ensure that all foster youth in Oregon are prepared to transition out of foster care and become successful adults in our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation.

Roberta Dunn
Executive Director
FACT Oregon