



Oregon Foster Parent Association

Empowers, supports, and advocates for all Oregon Foster Parents

3/12/2019

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

RE: SB 745

My name is Jessica Lloyd-Rogers and I am the president of the Oregon Foster Parent Association. We are committed to empowering, supporting, and advocating for all Oregon foster parents including those certified by private and tribal agencies and those who serve the Oregon Youth Authority.

More than 40 years ago, I aged out of the foster care system unprepared for the practical demands of adult life. Learning what I needed to know was hard, heartbreaking, and too frequently, dangerous. It appears that not much has changed. Data shows us that foster youth will face more obstacles, barriers and detours than most young people face. Former foster youth are currently less likely to finish high school and gain higher education and are more likely to face disproportionate levels of unemployment and homelessness. Unfortunately, they are also at a higher risk for domestic violence, incarceration, and suicide.

In 2017, less than half of eligible youth received ILP services. The Independent Living Program helps give foster youth the skills they need for a more positive future. It codifies the learning for 'adulting' issues so that nothing is missed, and it gives youth the opportunity for another supportive adult relationship. Those who volunteer to foster do what they can to prepare youth for the launch to adulthood on top of their already full plate. But it is, of necessity, a hit and miss proposition. They cannot do it all. OFPA believes that every foster youth deserves to be prepared in a systematic way to optimize their survival in the larger community and to give them the best chance to become confident, competent, contributing adults to our larger community.

SB 745 asks for an additional \$8.5 million for transition services for foster youth, including Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP). If passed as amended, it would expand the age for eligibility for ILP from 16-21 to 14-23 so that more foster youth can learn the skills needed for a successful transition out of foster care.

I'm a survivor of foster care. I fought the odds to sit here before you today. ILP services such as those in SB745 don't just ease a young person's transition. They will impact his or her life for decades. These young people will make a difference in our community. It is up to you what kind of difference they are empowered and trained to make.

On behalf of the Oregon Foster Parent Association, I ask that you support and expand ILP services so that all foster youth in Oregon are prepared to transition out of foster care and become successful adults. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.