



Oregon Foster Parent Association

Empowers, supports, and advocates for all Oregon Foster Parents

3/13/2019

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Findley, Vice Chair Marsh, and Members of the Committee

RE: HB 2868

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. While we are still collecting complete data, our rough working estimates indicate that a significant number, perhaps as high as one third of all Oregon foster parents are certified by other than DHS.

We welcome and support the underlying intent of this bill as expressed in the summary: "Creates income tax credit for foster parents." And we ask that you amend the text to truly reflect all foster parents.

As you know, foster parents are volunteers who step forward to support the most vulnerable among us, despite the very real risks to their future careers and their own bio families because they believe in the mission more than they fear the risks. While foster parents do receive a partial reimbursement, in Oregon that amounts to about 63% of what it costs to take a child into their home. So, not only are they volunteering to care for these children and youth in the state's custody, but they are paying for the opportunity.

All Oregon foster parent volunteers are currently held to many expectations, standards, and legal obligations that are not applied to any others who work to support the children and youth in care of the State. As you have probably heard, this enhanced burden harms both retention and recruitment as foster parents continue to flee the program claiming a lack of support for the very difficult work they do. Their shared stories of personal experience actively inhibit recruitment efforts. This bill is a small but welcome move in the right direction- in indicator of real support.

However, HB 2868, as currently written, discriminates against many Oregon foster parents and calls out those who are certified by DHS for special rewards.

On behalf of the Oregon Foster Parent Association, I thank you for the support expressed in this bill and ask that you amend it to truly include all foster parents as stated in the summary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.