



Good Afternoon Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Mary Laws and I am a former foster parent. My husband Doug and I are twenty-five year veterans of the Treatment Foster Care Oregon program, or “TFCO,” in Lane County. We served more than seventy high-needs children in our time as therapeutic foster parents, mostly young women and girls. It was the most powerful experience of my life.

For those of you who haven’t heard of TFCO it is a comprehensive training and support program which includes positive parenting training for foster parents, foster parent peer-support groups, therapy, for youth and their aftercare parents or family of origin, crisis planning, a daily behavior management plan, daily check ins, rigorous data collection, and 24/7 on-call support . TFCO supports therapeutic foster families and foster children who have significant challenges including serious mental health problems and trauma. Many of these young people rely on a variety of state agencies and supports, so that the child can remain placed in a family setting, rather than an institutional one.

There are many great things about TFCO, but for me, the best part of the Treatment Foster Care Oregon program was how it simplified my role. Through training and support TFCO allowed me to be a parent to these children, which in turn allowed them the space they needed to heal and grow.

When I learned about the proposed \$3.5 million dollar investment to serve more youth and families with therapeutic foster care I was overcome with hope. And that is the most valuable feeling you get as a supported foster parent in TFCO, hope. There is an overwhelming sense that you are part of a team providing an opportunity for a child to change the trajectory of not

only their future, but in many cases the future of their entire family. I know because I am in contact with nearly all of the kiddos I once parented and now I am honored to say that many of their children call me grandma.

Thank you for taking public comment on this crucial program. I urge you to support the Children and Youth with Specialized Needs with an aye vote on Senate Bill 221 with the dash 4 amendments.

Thank you,

Mary Laws, Retired Treatment Foster Care Oregon Parent