



Chair Williamson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Marissa Johnson and I am the facilitator of Foster Homes of Healing, a 12 member coalition whose primary purpose is to elevate the quality of foster care in Oregon through legislative action. I am before you to testify in support of HB 2849.

From the beginning our coalition determined that the challenges facing the child foster care system in Oregon spanned the spectrum. There is need for changes to policy from the time a family or child first comes into contact with the dependency system either through protective custody or child welfare involvement, through a child's dependency in the system, to reunification, and transition at the other end. Ultimately we know that in order to appropriately serve the children in Oregon who need a safe placement outside their family of origin, we have to cut down on the number of youth being placed into care.

House Bill 2849 clarifies the exact causes that warrant the protective custody of a child, reaffirms the requirement of least-restrictive option for placing the child safely, and aligns the Oregon protective custody statute with the child's constitutional rights.

It is paramount that the rights of children and families of origin be protected just as it is crucial that we do all we can to protect the safety of children in Oregon dependent care. With that I urge your aye vote on House Bill 2849.