



April 29, 2019

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

Re: Support for SB 278A

Our support for this legislative concept is based on the foundation provided by the voices of current and former foster youth involved with the Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC). OFYC is a statewide, youth led advocacy group of current and former foster youth between the ages of 14 and 24. OFYC members shape every aspect of what OFYC is, how it is structured, which policies OFYC works on, and what activities OFYC participates in. With support and training from OFYC and Children First for Oregon, youth are empowered to actively participate in the development of policies, programs, and practices that improve the lives of thousands of young people in Oregon's foster care system.

Over 30 OFYC youth came together last summer to develop a set of policy recommendations to address issues they identified within the child welfare system. One of the problems highlighted by the youth was the lack of affordable and safe housing options for current and former foster youth, especially with consideration to LGBTQIA2S+, and other historically marginalized populations.

As we know, we have a housing crisis across Oregon, and former foster youth are one population at significant risk of houselessness in our current housing environment. I have shared a recent Annie E. Casey Foundation report, *Fostering Youth Transitions*, along with a one-page summary and additional Oregon-specific data from the National Youth in Transition database on OLIS. The database includes survey data from youth in care at age 17, along with follow-up survey data at ages 19 and 21 from the same youth. This system of data collection will over time provide multiple cohorts to track outcomes. Cohort 2 data was completed in FY 18 and of the 21-year-olds who had aged out of foster care, 1 in 3 of them reported being homeless at some point in the previous two years.

As part of their most recent policy recommendations, OFYC youth called on all of us to solve this problem by prioritizing housing for all foster youth, current and former, including LGBTQIA2S+ and marginalized youth. Prioritizing housing for foster youth will require a number of steps, but we see SB 278A through expanding the Rent Guarantee Program to current and former foster youth up to age 27 as one tool to help address this problem.

There is much work to be done to better support youth who age out of foster care without permanency, and to maximize existing programs for this population. We ask for your support for SB 278A. Thank you for your time.

Chris Coughlin
Legislative Director