

April 29, 2019

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

Re: Support for SB 278

My name is Johnmartin Sherman-Lewis, and I am a former foster child. I currently intern in Senator Jeff Golden's office and while I do have stable housing, children aging out of the foster care system find themselves at a strong disadvantage in their search for stable, affordable housing.

When I entered the foster care system, I was 16 years old and a full-time college student working part-time at Starbucks. After moving to the foster home, in an area without a local Starbucks to transfer to, my work commute rose from a twenty-minute walk to a two-and-a-half hour commute each way. As such, I was left with considerably less earned income during that time to afford high Portland area rental costs.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development in their 2014 report on *Housing for Youth Aging out of Foster Care*,¹ detail that "studies estimate about 25 to 50 percent of youth are precariously housed after exiting care." Children leaving the foster care system typically do not have a cosigner for a rental agreement, have no credit history, and are living on their own for the first time after leaving, in my case, a kind, but crowded foster home. Housing stability, tenant protections, and the incentive of a mutually-beneficial landlord-tenant relationship would go a long way to decrease youth homelessness and to alleviate unnecessary burdens on foster youth exiting care.

If SB 278 had been in place when I exited the foster care system, I would have been better able to independently rent an apartment, have confidence in the consistency of my living situation, and would become altogether more capable of independent living. For these reasons, and for the benefits this bill would provide for other former or current foster children, I ask for your support of SB 278.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Johnmartin Sherman-Lewis
Milwaukie, OR

¹https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/youth_hsg_main_report.pdf