

**Presentation to the  
Ways and Means Senate Committee on Human Services  
May 6, 2019**

Respectfully and thoughtfully submitted to House Members Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, and Members of the Committee Fagan, Knopp, and Monnes-Anderson.

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about HB 2033.

My name is Charity Haskins. I am a mother and in my professional career work with vulnerable Protected Persons.

While I am new to working with Protected Persons (almost 4 years now), I'm not new to parenting. I am 40 years old and have two boys ages 16 and 6. I am a single parent who graduated summa cum laude in January 2015 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services with an emphasis in Child Welfare & Family, and a minor in Legal Studies.

I have had several interactions with Child Welfare as a mandatory reporter in the State of Nevada and Klamath County, Oregon, with concerns I had with children. In my personal life I have had interactions with the Child Welfare Department in Polk County, Oregon.

In all instances the communications and interactions I had with Child Welfare workers there were actions and vocabulary that were less than professional.

My most recent and only personal experience with Child Welfare was November 2016-February 2017, in Polk County Oregon. I will not go into details that are not relevant to this discussion, however, it should be noted that the amount of human dignity extended to me was less than acceptable.

The Child Welfare worker neglected to include emails and communications in her written assessment that had substantial impact on the details of the interactions she had with myself and my children. There were opinions stated as facts and crucial information left out which painted a very different picture than what had really happened in several instances. Luckily the Polk County and City of Dallas Police Officers were factual and thorough in their documentation in reports. In all reports it was clear that there were no concerns of me and my parenting, however, the child welfare workers written assessment documented conflicting information with no facts. In the child welfare workers assessment, she also failed to document the many times I had asked her for help in dealing with my teenager who was out of control. **It seems that child welfare workers need more training and education on how to assist families rather than ignore them.**

Ultimately, everything was unsubstantiated for abuse and/or neglect, however, I was taken to court by both of the fathers of my children; both in 2017/2018 due to what the child welfare worker had written in her assessment. The child welfare worker then testified, under oath, that Child Welfare was prepared to take custody of my children. It has taken me two years but I finally got it in writing from the Director of Polk County Child Welfare that they in fact had absolutely no intentions of removing custody and had no understanding of why the child welfare worker would have testified to that. **It seems more education in ethical standards is long overdue for CPS workers.**

As you can imagine, this has had a huge impact on myself and my children. I kept custody despite what the child welfare testified and plan to continue to advocate and lobby that there be some sort of actions to correct this situation **and improve child welfare standards of ethics.**

The reason I share this with you is because of my concern with who the next child welfare worker will be in that type of position. **It is my shared opinion with many others that there is a lack of education and oversight to Child Welfare worker actions.** If one is to do a formal complaint it is investigated by DHS as well through the Governor's' Advocacy Office. There needs to be some third party non-affiliate of DHS that oversees this organization and the actions of the child welfare workers. Another prime example is what was just released

with the 2 child welfare workers having sexual relations in front of a foster child and then punishing that child for speaking out.

It terrifies me that someone with no education on the cultural backgrounds of the following demographics could be responsible for the removal of children from their homes.

- Single Parents
- Disabled veterans
- Student Parents
- Rural
- LGBT
- Minority
- Tribal
- Homeless

In my education experience there were many classes I took that centered on case studies dealing with confidentiality, mandatory reporting, cultural competency, adolescent development and realistic expectations of adolescents at different ages. With the growing epidemic of mental health and homelessness, someone without a degree will lack the basic skills to understand what it is they are encountering and could make some detrimental decisions by misunderstanding “observations” that could grossly impact many lives, especially the lives of those that they are put in place to protect. **I would even suggest upgrading the requirements to include a degree in social work and behavioral sciences rather than an unrelated degree such as accounting for meeting minimum requirements to best serve Oregonian children.**

Without the degree requirements I question whether or not the child welfare workers would be able to properly understand and interpret signs abuse and neglect that can be easily missed and the importance of accurate documentation. **There are some things that need to be learned prior to being on the job. A child welfare worker needs to be taught several ways to think and approach certain topics, such as what is accomplished in law school.**

Please, members of the board, as a parent who cares greatly for children

and vulnerable populations, I respectfully beg of you to vote no on HB 2033. It is imperative that people with the power to impact families this substantially have education requirements.

**If I can work full time and achieve a higher education degree as a single mother while caring for my children, then anyone who cares enough about the position they are to fill can do it too. Don't think of the poor single mom story read to you by Marilyn with DHS, think of the thousands of children lives who will be impacted here in Oregon for many years to come. Please VOTE NO on 2033!! Thank you for your time.**