

ILP Testimony-

Good Afternoon Senator Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, Members of the committee.

My name is Maddy Langan. I'm from Sherwood, Oregon. I'm currently a first year at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. I spent nine years in the Oregon Foster Care System.

To begin I'd like to share some facts. In the US, barely 50% of youth in care will graduate high school and less than 3% graduate from a four year college¹. In the US, including Oregon, only half of former foster youth will be employed by 24². These statistics have remained stagnant and overlooked for too many years now. We discuss our economy, our education, and the future of the country, often leaving out the 443,000 youth in care nationally on any given day³.

Older foster youth, specifically those that age out are statistically less likely to achieve their dreams, as shown. The expansion of Independent Living Programs can prevent this. OFYC's legislative priority for 2020 is: Expanding Transition Services for Foster Youth. HB 4120 asks for an additional \$2 million for transition services for foster youth through Oregon's Independent Living Program (ILP). If passed, ILP providers will be stabilized so they continue their important work. This investment will result in more coaches, create smaller caseloads, and serve up to 200 more youth in the ILP program statewide. The legislative concept for the bill was *proposed and developed by current and former foster youth* at the Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) Policy Conference in 2018, where youth came up with a total of 10 policy recommendations to improve foster care in Oregon.

Youth in foster care are not given the luxury to imagine their future lives, when everyday is a struggle for surviving the next 24 hours. I know countless foster youth who were eligible for ILP services, but the lack of ILP providers, specifically those that could give time to those with mental health disabilities, prevented them from using ILP, my older brother with autism being an

¹ Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth Outcomes at Age 26 (2011)

² Foster Club <https://www.fosterclub.com/article/statistics-foster-care>

³ <https://www.childrensrights.org/newsroom/fact-sheets/foster-care/>

example of this. As someone who grew up in an unstable living situation, being told to think about a future at 14, when I was still dealing with trauma and reevaluating my past, seemed impossible. I didn't even consider college until I was 16, and thoroughly behind at that point. My brother similarly had no support after high school, he dropped out of college his sophomore year. I often wonder how ILP could've helped support him through the transition to adulthood.

Independent Living Program helps pave a path for the future. They help youth draft resumes, look into colleges, fill out FAFSA, help with interview preparedness, help with housing after care, and numerous other services. These services are crucial to give a substantial portion of Oregon citizens a fighting chance at having a future. To support **House Bill 4120** is supporting equitable access to education, careers, and a future for those who often fall through the cracks.