

Submitter: Lauren Bowen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB548

My name is Lauren Bowen. I am a mother of three, an elementary school secretary and I am in full support of SB548.

My first experience with foster care came by way of introduction through a foster family. They were fostering two children and invited us to partner with them and join them with everything that entails. We quickly signed up to provide respite services for not only her family but others who may need it; we were introduced to families who had been reunified recently and graduated out of the foster care system and met those who would enter the care system again. Through each of these experiences you the immense vulnerability of the children being placed in care cannot be denied. Every interaction, every decision, every move is a comment on what they believe about their world, their safety and themselves. This is why the passing of SB548 is a must. What others might see as a convenience or a means to an end is actually a comment on identity. Using trash bags to transport children's items from place to place makes the comment, "You are nothing more than an inconvenience; that something to be handled and passed on; you get no more consideration than a weekly chore." When we replace trash bags with duffles, we replace the message of, "You are a temporary chore" with "You belong. You were thought about. You are welcome and encouraged to take space in whatever home or location you may be in." It protects valuables and creates a sense of consistency but more so, it communicates, "You have worth."

I appreciate you taking the time to listen to and hear valuable feedback on SB548. Thank you for caring about our vulnerable children.

Lauren Bowen Respite Care, Advocate, Friend