



projectlemonade
10 years inspiring self-esteem in foster youth

January 30, 2023

Lindsay McDonnell
Executive Director
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Project Lemonade
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RE: Oregon Senate Bill 548 -
Relating to transportation of foster child's personal effects.

To Whom It May Concern:

Since 2012, Project Lemonade has provided self-esteem inspiring experiences to youth in foster care. We have served almost 20,000 youth in Oregon during this time. At the center of our work is the Project Lemonade store, a clothing store in Portland where youth in foster care shop for free for new clothes, shoes and accessories. Youth living amid upheaval and trauma come to Project Lemonade for a normalizing experience with a goal to leave the store wearing clothes that give them confidence and reflect their unique style and personality.

As a system, we tell youth that they are in foster care through no fault of their own. However, youth tell us that does not always feel true. During critical moments in the foster care journey, such as entering care or moving homes, we have a chance to *show* youth they are valued; that they are the ones being centered in the process.

A youth advocate with lived experience told me recently that, "Intention is not as important as impact." Putting a youth's belongings into a garbage bag sends a message about their worth, whether or not we intend it to. The garbage bag has become the prototypical example of how youth feel while they are in care. Replacing the garbage bag with a duffel bag will have a significant impact on the youth's wellbeing and align with the goals of Child Welfare.

Project Lemonade strongly believes that providing duffel bags to youth is an important step in changing the narrative on the foster care system. We applaud the continual efforts of ODHS to improve the Child Welfare system and witness hard work at all levels to make change happen. We believe this bill will support the positive change underway and send the message to youth that they are valued.

Sincerely,

Lindsay McDonnell

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lm', written in a cursive style.

Executive Director