



March 20, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin,  
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Marissa Cade and I am a former foster parent to a high-acuity kiddo with developmental challenges and several diagnoses. I am the ongoing chosen mom to that same young woman. I also have the honor of serving as the facilitator of the Foster Homes of Healing Coalition for our fifth year of advocacy. Foster Homes of Healing is a coalition of organizations that serve foster youth and their families every day. Our primary purpose is to elevate the quality of foster care in Oregon through legislative action. We support current and former foster youth having access to child abuse investigation reports about their own alleged or founded abuse, as outlined in this bill. We appreciate the amendments which provide additional clarity, and we believe additional changes are needed to better define parameters for the potential recipients of the child abuse investigation reports.

Our coalition is committed to the care of children and youth in some of the most difficult circumstances of their young lives. Many of us have firsthand experience and know a foster child or former foster child who does not have basic information and documentation regarding their history. We support foster and former foster children and youth having access to records regarding abuse they experienced or that was reported about them.

Child abuse investigations are incredibly detailed, lengthy processes, as they should be. Children should be guarded against abuse carefully. The result of a child abuse investigation in Oregon is an enormous amount of information. Some of that information may not be classified as *identifiable*, but nonetheless could lead directly to identifying those involved. The investigation information is too sensitive and critical to be provided at a detailed level to a broad list of possible recipients. The availability of this information should be limited with fewer categories and specifically defined people eligible to receive such reports as defined in SB 823.

Foster youth are incredibly resilient survivors. When a child is removed from their family of origin, trauma is experienced, and foster youth live through that and often much more. Because of feelings of confusion, overwhelm, and unhappiness some children and youth make false allegations of abuse. Reports including unfounded, unsubstantiated, and inconclusive reports of abuse, with detailed

information about those involved could create serious concerns of retaliation, safety, and privacy for all involved.

In Oregon, we have a lack of placement capacity for some of the most vulnerable kids with the highest incidence of behavioral and emotional challenges. An incredibly committed and generous group of individuals provide care for such youth. These caretakers include residential facilities and treatment facilities, but they also include therapeutic foster care families. These families make many sacrifices and do an incredible amount of work to support the development and thriving of the youth they care for. There are not enough of these families for the number of children who need this level of care. We recognize that bad actors can show up anywhere and we agree that there is an incredible need for oversight and accountability on behalf of these youth, but it needs to be done carefully so as not to prevent good people from stepping up to do this work.

Foster Homes of Healing requests additional constraints to the list of individuals and entities who have access of child abuse investigation reports defined in SB 823, and tighter definitions of when and how a report qualifies to be released to anyone other than the foster youth implicated in the report.

Thank you,

*Marissa Cade*

Facilitator, Foster Homes of Healing

2023 Foster Homes of Healing Membership:

- NAYA Family Services
- Oregon Social Learning Center
- Oregon CASA Network
- Catholic Community Services
- Northwest Post Adoption Resource Center
- Oregon Community Programs
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon
- Basic Rights Oregon