

Submitter: Whitney Rodgers  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835

Chair Hartman , vice chair sharp members of this committee and to members of Ofyc who are listening in remotely. My name is Whitney Rodgers. It's an honor to be here today representing my thoughts on HB 3835

I am a former foster youth and the current program director of Oregon Foster Youth Connection a lateral leadership organization serving youth in care ages 14-26. I came here to request that this committee stand between Oregon most vulnerable children and this well meaning yet poorly worded bill.

I want to my deepest intentions clear. I want to reform the child welfare system. The partnership with odhs is essential. I don't believe this bill is going to have the desired outcome.

ODHS cannot be allowed to change where and how abuse is being reported. This will affect the reform process in the state. Proponents of this bill said that they have the approval of Ron Wyden's office. I could confirm that Ron Wyden's office does not support the effects of this bill. It is insulting that ODHS would use the death of Jacob to support this bill. Nothing about this bill would've provided resources to Jacob. Nothing about this bill would've secured a placement for him when he had been lodged in hotels for so many months.

I know from experience. From living in a group homes where there was no functioning shower, no consistent meals, and where cameras could be unplugged and youth were at the discretion of staff. To psychiatric facilities where I was put in isolation for five days at a time, medicated to the point I lost ability to speak for myself, and forced labor I was never compensated for. I know from visiting my clients in their group homes and in their detention facilities. I want to affirm that none of my criticisms today are directed at any individuals.

HB 3835 sounds good a face value but it strips away a youth's fundamental rights to self determination and personhood. The individuals supporting this bill claim it will reduce confusion , streamline abuse reports, and would allow for exceptions to out-of-state placements.

Yes. I also want to address these and the provider concerns. Privatizing the care of Oregon's most acutely vulnerable children is not a viable solution. I cringed as members of ODHS and their contracted associates lied to this committee about the impact these changes will have on families and children. To hear a pediatrician go against well know peer review studies that outlining the substantial psychological risk that chemical restraints and seclusion place on children to me is shameful and an

embarrassment. Holding kids down that are suffering and in crisis only erodes trust, validates unhelpful behavior, and teaches our youth lessons of violence. Evidence from notable studies in Massachusetts and Vermont can be found with a simple Google search. Not to mention in the studies from, psychiatric and pediatrician literature.

This does not mean we cannot meet the needs of youth with violent tendencies. This doesn't mean we can't protect providers. It means we need to follow best practices of states that are not seeing their kids languishing in hotels and in behavior residential. It means we improve trainings when it comes to emergency holds and de-escalation tactics.

I am all about partnership, across the board definitions, and making incentives to providers within state. Not reducing protections for youth. Not changing definitions to improve reports of abuse. I encourage this committee to delay this bill. Send it back to the workshop. If Oregon wants to address these issues, we need to prioritize incentives to draw in more providers and make Oregon an easier place to live in. With all respect to the members of this committee,  
Whitney Rodgers