



Senate Committee on Education
April 4, 2017
Senate Bill 996 Oregon's Bright Future Children's Savings Accounts

Chair Roblan and members of the Committee,

Founded in 1981, Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) has been part of the heart and soul of the African-American community in Multnomah County for nearly 35 years. Anchored in inner-North/Northeast Portland, SEI is Oregon's largest African-American-led multiservice organization. It is nationally recognized for providing culturally specific educational support, youth development, and wraparound services to African-American students and their families. SEI's theory of change is that underserved African American youth and adults will believe that "life has options" and achieve their full potential when supported by the relationships and comprehensive system of support needed to address complex interrelated educational, economic, and personal barriers.

We ask for your support on Children's Savings Accounts through the Oregon Bright Futures Initiative, creating opportunities for families to achieve financial security and a college bound identity for their children.

Children's Savings Accounts (CSA) provides a tool for our families that are most impacted by financial barriers to attending college and post-secondary education. Our community resides in neighborhoods that have the county's highest rates of entrenched poverty, crime, gang activity, and single-parent households. Having a savings account opened at birth for their child creates an opportunity for a family to create long lasting financial health and college bound identity for their children at the onset. Access to financial empowerment tools such as the CSA aligns with SEI wrap around services of getting children across the graduation line and becoming positive contributing citizens in our community. CSA's involve participation of the entire family and will increase awareness to the importance of saving for education after high school and allow families to take action in achieving that goal.

SEI urges your support of this important proposal to lift up our most vulnerable communities. Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and for your service to the people of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Melissa Hicks
Co-Director of Community + Family Programs, Self Enhancement, Inc.

SELF ENHANCEMENT, INC.

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