



Testimony in Support of HB2337

February 6, 2019

Good afternoon, Chair Keny-Guyer and Committee Members:

My name is Mary Schoen-Clark and I serve as a facilitator for Foster Parents Together. I am also a former foster parent, an adoptive parent from foster care and a current respite care provider. I am here today to testify in support of HB2337. This bill establishes a foster parent ombudsperson.

Foster Parents Together started as an informal group of 139 foster parents in Oregon connecting online through social media and more recently, face-to-face. Foster parents have an important role and perspective from on-the-ground daily experience and need an elevated voice to be partners at the table for critical decisions, protected from retaliation, to speak to the child(ren)'s best interests.

Foster Parents Together has four (4) priorities at this time to:

- 1) Improve the Receptivity and Inclusion of Foster Parent Voice in critical decision-making as articulated in the Oregon Foster Parent Bill of Rights enacted in Oregon Revised Statute ORS 418.648 on January 1, 2006
- 2) Support the Establishment of an Independent Foster Parent Ombudsperson
- 3) Improve Childcare Reimbursement
- 4) Improve Legal Support of Foster Parents

We see the passage of HB2337 as an important step in the process of beginning to give a voice to Foster Parents when things go wrong for children in the system. When procedures and policies are not followed, long-term damage can be eminent for the children. This is a system which by its nature is a purely human endeavor and as such mistakes are made which must be reviewed and corrected. Foster Parents welcome the opportunity to have a place to voice their concerns. Every situation is unique and requires a thorough review as our littlest citizens are what is at stake.

Foster Parents Together pledges their support for the success of this bill and its ideals before and long after it is passed.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

Mary Schoen-Clark

Mary Schoen-Clark, Facilitator
Foster Parents Together

For more information, contact Mary Schoen-Clark at:

Email: mschoenclark@hotmail.com

Phone: (971) 282-3302

Join our social media group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FosterParentsTogether/>

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