

Public Hearing - Senate Bill 371

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A Child's Voice

- It is common for children to have a legal voice in other states and other countries
- In the State of Oregon there is no legal age for a child to have a legal voice
- Without a child's voice, difficult environments can go unnoticed
 - Children can speak to their true environment - they are living the experience, first person

Global Silence

- My son wanted a legal voice
 - He wrote a letter to the presiding judge of our county and requested an attorney
- He was appointed an attorney
 - The attorney told him it would not be good for him to testify and offered to testify for him
- He explained to the attorney that he wanted his own voice
 - The attorney said he was concerned about parentification
- A judge also said that it would not be good for my son to testify in court
- My son was silenced when he wanted a voice

Conclusion

- Children are not property – they are people
- Children need a voice about their environment
- Appointed child advocates, child attorneys and guardian ad litem
 - Can save children from a difficult living environment, abuse, and death
- A closed-door conversation with a judge in lieu of third party representation
 - Eliminates confusion with third party representation and parents
 - Similar to a therapy appointment or a visit to the doctor
- A child's legal voice and preference is common and healthy
- A five year pilot program is too long
 - Children in the State of Oregon need a voice now

Next Steps

- Amend the bill to a two-year pilot program
- Pass the bill
- Implement the pilot