

3-19-19

Testimony for HB3208

As a professional in the child welfare field for going on 20 years, I am all too aware of the challenges that youth who have experienced trauma face. These youth not only lack secure attachments with a trusted caregiver, they lack appropriate models for safety and consistency, and they lack the coping skills to deal with all of the above. All of this can lead to behavioral issues that result in the youth being labeled as “hard to place” or “unadoptable” and without the work of highly skilled and trained staff, their chances of finding a permanent home are bleak. As those of us in the field know all too well, this lack of permanent connection is likely to result in the cycle of poverty, addiction, abuse and neglect repeating itself, putting further strain on the system and future young lives.

Helping Oregon’s most vulnerable children heal and find permanent connections, can only be done through the assistance of highly skilled and trained staff, who are committed to working with and for these youth. However, acquiring staff with this skill set, while paying them a wage that far undervalues their skills, only leads to burnout, turnover and another loss for the children whom they serve. I urge the Oregon Legislature to pass HB3208 to ensure that Oregon’s most vulnerable children get what every child deserves, the opportunity to grow into healthy, thriving adults, and to break the cycle. HB3208 will do this by requesting sufficient funding to enable providers to attract, hire, train and retain the high-level staff needed to accomplish this goal, amongst many other objectives. I hereby express my full support for this bill.

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