



Dear Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer and members of the committee,

HB 2033 – STRONGLY OPPOSE that giving Department of Human Services the authority to set minimum academic degree requirements is a fair and equitable employment practice.

Child welfare director Marilyn Jones admits that this isn't to fill a desperate hiring gap, but she said it would open up a more diverse pool of job candidates.

The state can already hire caseworkers who are on track to earn a bachelor's degree if managers have difficulty filling a job. So, this seems to go further to actually hire unqualified caseworkers that have no intention of being qualified in order to pay them as if they were qualified – giving them no incentive to become qualified.

Reviews of Oregon's child welfare system have highlighted persistent problems, including inconsistencies in how workers screen reports of abuse going back to at least 2002. Children who were interviewed as part of a 2016 report told a consultant that the child welfare system "treats them as 'bad' kids who did something wrong to end up in foster care, and, as a result, doesn't trust them." This is what you get with inadequate trained caseworkers.

Some states are actually going in the opposite direction and requiring specific bachelor's degrees in social work or related areas. The welfare program in Oregon cannot be strengthened by diminishing qualifications whether it's in services to children, equality in workforce, or Oregon's ranking among states. This bill goes in the wrong direction.

Vote NO for a better Oregon.

Donna Bleiler