

Senate Committee On Education

5/8/2019 1:00 PM

Regarding: Support for HB 3015 and HB 2571

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Thomsen, members of the committee

Hello, my name is Hanna Dekker and I am representing OFYC. OFYC stands for Oregon Foster Youth Connection. OFYC is a statewide, youth led advocacy group of current and former foster youth between the ages of 14 and 24.

Stereotypically, foster youth are looked at as young people who either won't go to college or never get a chance to go. We're looked at as the part of society that's "least likely to succeed". Some of us hear that on a regular basis and sometimes it's hard to not believe it, but some of us will still push to prove this stereotype wrong. Foster youth should have just as good of a chance at getting a college degree, and passing House Bill 3015 and House Bill 2571 will help achieve this.

I will be the first one in my family to graduate college and I am one of the many foster youth who will be first generation in their families. As everyone knows, college is extremely expensive. Being a foster youth brings a lot of barriers in life and college is one of the biggest. Full time college students have a better chance with getting help with college tuition where as part time time students have to find ways to pay tuition. Now some foster youth find amazing foster parents who want to be able to call their foster child their own and legally adopt them and [to me] that's amazing because that would mean a great, permanent, stable home for a foster youth. Foster parents are having to choose between adopting their foster youth or college tuition for their foster youth, how is that fair? This brings a whole new barrier for foster youth to have to go through.

These changes will be important tools in the toolbox towards creating permanency for teens in the system. If passed, HB 3015 means they won't have to choose between a permanent adoptive family, and the opportunity for college tuition. If passed, HB 2571 means foster youth will be have a little cushion to help with college tuition. This will help more foster youth to beat the stereotype and be able to attend college and succeed in reaching our goals. Thank you for your time today.