

*"Hello Chair Gelser and members of the committee, my name is Hanna, I live in Washington County, House District 34 and Senate District 17 (H: Representative Helm S: Senator Steiner Hayward) I was in foster care for 6 years and am here representing the Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC). OFYC is a statewide, youth led advocacy group of current and former foster youth between the ages of 14 and 24. OFYC members shape every aspect of what OFYC is, how it is structured, which policies we work on, and what activities we participate in. With support and training from OFYC and Our Children Oregon, youth are empowered to actively participate in the development of policies, programs, and practices that improve the lives of thousands of young people in Oregon's foster care system. The youth leaders of OFYC have elevated the need to reduce bias in child welfare decisions as our 2021 Session priority, HB 2505 and HB 3182 are ways to accomplish just that.*

*The biggest thing I struggled with in foster care was my age and that made it harder for me to get into placements due to the negative connotations surrounding bias around teenagers, therefore leading me to move at least 9 placements while in care. The bias around teenagers refers to the stereotypes that have been put on them that they are thieves, temperamental, destructive, etc. While in foster care I was moved multiple times due to different reasons such as placements being closed, foster parent licenses being revoked, and due to the fact that I was in general, another teenager, therefore putting me in situations where I had to be in emergency placements such as filthy homes, hotels, lockdown facilities, and even behavioral programs/homes because of most foster parents not liking to house teens.*

*Passing HB 2505 will strengthen the existing Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission and create a Child Welfare Equity Committee to provide oversight and recommend actions to address bias. HB 3182 will finalize and strengthen the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act which was passed in the first special session of 2020 (HB 4214). HB 3182 will provide some important fixes and it will put best practices for adoptions into Oregon's adoption laws, and it will*

*recognize customary adoptions that align with traditional tribal practices and the importance of tribal families.*

*Will you support HB 2505 and HB 3182?" - Hanna Love*

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