



PROTECT VULNERABLE YOUTH IN OREGON – SUPPORT [SB 572](#)

What does the bill do?

The bill creates a technical fix to ORS 125 so that *vulnerable youth* between the ages of 18 and 21 can ask an Oregon court to appoint a trusted adult as their guardian. The bill would help protect an estimated 70-100 *vulnerable youth* in Oregon each year.

Who are these vulnerable youth?

Vulnerable youth are non-U.S. citizens without current permanent legal immigration status for whom (1) reunification with one or both parents is not possible because they have been abandoned, abused, or neglected; and (2) being returned to their country of origin is not in their best interest.

Vulnerable youth are particularly susceptible to becoming victims of human trafficking; the additional protection and support a guardian would offer, such as stable housing and caring for necessities, would help alleviate many of the risk factors for trafficking and exploitation.

Do these youth have documentation or immigration status?

The vast majority of the youth are seeking asylum and entered the country with permission. Other youth may have some form of temporary lawful immigration status.

What else does the bill do?

Consistent with federal law, the bill also removes a barrier to *vulnerable youths'* ability to apply for *Special Immigrant Juvenile status (SIJ Status)*, a legal status that prevents deportation of youth who have endured parental mistreatment to countries where they risk further harm.

What are other states doing?

Washington, California, Colorado, and other states have all fixed their laws to protect *vulnerable youth* after they turn 18 by allowing them to stay with a supportive guardian. Oregon should not fall behind in protecting its young people and deny them existing federal protections.

What happens if we don't pass the bill?

The challenges *vulnerable youth* face – recovering from the trauma of parental abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and adjusting to a new culture and language – do not magically disappear at age 18. A formalized legal relationship with a trusted, responsible adult promotes the *vulnerable youth's* long-term well-being and stability, decreases reliance on public resources, and reduces youth homelessness between the ages of 18 and 21. Especially during these challenging times, passing this bill is one way we can help these young people recover from the past and build a better future here in Oregon.

Why does this matter?

SIJ STATUS ELIGIBILITY

- Under 21
- Abused by a parent
- At risk of deportation to country where face harmful conditions
- State court order

SIJ STATUS PROTECTIONS

- Work permit
- Not deported
- Eligible to apply for permanent residence (“green card”)

GUARDIAN BENEFITS

- Stable relationship with trusted caring adult
- Help accessing vital services (education, health care, legal)

How is Oregon law misaligned with federal requirements?

FEDERAL SIJ STATUS

- Up to age 21

OREGON GUARDIANSHIP

- Up to age 18

How Oregon Can Meet Federal Requirements

Voluntary limited guardianships for certain vulnerable young people

- **Voluntary:**
 - Only if young person and proposed guardian consent
 - Young person can terminate at any time
- **Limited:**
 - Only until age 21
 - Young person retains rights as adult
- **Certain vulnerable young people:**
 - Abused by parent
 - Not in best interest to return to home country

For more information, contact:

Gordon Levitt

District Director, Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner

Senate District 19

Gordon.levitt@oregonlegislature.gov; 541-980-3955