



OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT
Office of the State Court Administrator

February 9, 2021
(SENT BY EMAIL)

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
900 Court St NE, Room 331
Salem, Oregon, 97301

Re: Response to a Committee Question– Vulnerable Youth Guardianship, SB 572

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation:

The Oregon Judicial Department supports Senate Bill 572 which will create a new category of guardianship for vulnerable youth, making available in Oregon the protections afforded by Federal statutes. These are young people who face abuse, abandonment, neglect, and threats of homelessness and human trafficking who cannot be reunified with one or more of the person's parents due to abuse, neglect or abandonment that occurred when the person was a minor.

SB 572 allows the appointment of trusted adults as guardians for these vulnerable youth. This then allows them to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) Status – a process wherein the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services determines whether the individual meets the criteria for SIJ Status to protect from further risk of harm.

As to the question posed by Vice-Chair Thatcher regarding continued victimization of youth by would-be guardians, we appreciate that thoughtful concern. Whether in person or by video, Oregon judges regularly evaluate credibility and ascertain whether there are issues of coercion or other risks present in each individual case. We would be happy to discuss further how judges approach these challenges, and the tools they employ to more deeply assess cases when and if concerns arise. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Erin Pettigrew

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