

As a former case worker for the Child Welfare system, I can personally attest to the lack of support that the agency offers to parents, particularly Black, Brown, immigrant & poor families. Children are removed carelessly, and often permanently, from their parents as the state surveillances struggling parents' every move. These removals are almost entirely due to family stressors. I can tell you with great anger how it feels to remove children from their parents for being poor and giving them to middle class families and then paying that middle class family money that could have kept the family preserved. Children are removed from their parents under the false premise that they are unsafe, when instead, they are forced into a violent and punitive system designed to cause them harm. This is only exacerbated by the threat of harm allegation in Oregon. It allows workers to remove children based off predictions of harm formed with their own personal bias, not from any harm that has actually been committed.

As families continue to face unbelievable barriers, and as evictions will surely grow following the end of the moratorium, I can imagine that CW will be getting more cases and will be asking for more funding for staffing. Case workers, supervisors, and the DOJ often work under a white savior pretense and I can personally provide an unending amount of stories of undeniable and blatant racism, transphobia, and socio-economic discrimination. The major work of the agency should be to train staff and mandatory reporters on limiting the number of children coming into care. This system has been designed to make it easier for case workers to put children into foster care, so they do. The system has been designed so that the state is the gatekeepers of resources, so in order for parents to receive the tools they need to succeed, they are being forced into an abusive relationship with the state who watches their every move, adds impossible barriers, causes severe and long-lasting trauma to children, and anticipates and punishes them for minor incidences that all families endure.

I ask for legislatures to take a good, long look at how the systems are doing exactly what they were designed to do- punish and surveillance Black, Brown, immigrant, and poor folks. Instead of continuing to ignore the audits and data that show the harm actively being done by the agency, the state, and Governor's budget that fuels it, please reallocate funds used to uphold a racist and deleterious system to instead provide families financial means to obtain safe, reliable, and supportive means to raise their own children.