

February 6, 2021



Chair Williams,
Members of the House Committee on Housing and Human Services,

My name is Marissa Cade and I am a former foster parent to a high acuity special needs kiddo, and an ongoing chosen mom. I also have the honor of serving as the facilitator of the Foster Homes of Healing Coalition for our fourth year of advocacy. Foster Homes of Healing is a ten member coalition. Our primary purpose is to elevate the quality of foster care in Oregon through legislative action.

Even with all the resources, programs, and partners in the world, Oregon will not be successful enhancing family experiences and outcomes with regards to the child welfare system without putting the voices of affected youth and families at the center of the conversation. Funding the Foster Care Advisory Commission and the new subcommittee for equity and oversight, are critical steps to enhancing participation and elevating the voices of the families most affected by the Child Welfare - Foster Care agency.

We applaud the good-faith efforts and many additions the Department of Human Services has made to enhance their diversity, equity and inclusion, and community responsiveness across the agency to date. We also believe that it is not enough to have equity efforts being undertaken from within the Child Welfare department, there must be some mechanism for the impacted community to have oversight and input into those efforts. Are they working? Have there been unintended consequences of policies and procedures disproportionately impacting families of color? How can efforts be improved? House Bill 2505 provides the opportunity for the community to provide those answers, on an ongoing basis, and without creating another unfunded mandate -the costs of which the most vulnerable end up paying with their time.

Foster Homes of Healing urges this committee to pass, House Bill 2505, and support this effort to bring some balance to the power the state has in the lives of so many Child Welfare - Foster Care system consumers by resourcing this critical commission.

Thank you,

Marissa Cade

Facilitator, Foster Homes of Healing