

Written testimony for HB 2505

January 28, 2021

My name is Alan Linhares and I am Co-Chair of the Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission and have served on the commission since 2018. I support HB2505 because it will strengthen the Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission's ability to meet its mission and responsibilities requested by the legislature and thus improve the lives of foster youth throughout our state.

The Commission is tasked with a broad set of expectations which asks us to collect, interpret, analyze current policy, practices, as well as to monitor and evaluate key outcomes using data and to make recommendations to improve the child foster care system.

The Commission was established in the 2016 legislative session to advise the Governor and DHS child welfare director, and to recommend legislation regarding child foster care in Oregon. Unfortunately, funding for a staff member to provide technical analysis critical to ensuring the Commission can fully meet its mission was not included.

The lack of funding impacts our ability to recruit and retain Commissioners. Commissioners are volunteers who want to spend their time and energy advocating for an equitable, effective foster care system for families and young people in Oregon, not advocating for essential resources. Several prior commissioners have stated the lack of staffing as a factor for leaving the Commission.

HB 2505 expands the Commission by two members, establishes the Child Welfare Equality Subcommittee, and provides funding for an Oregon Department of Human Services Policy Analyst to support the Commission in achieving its mission as outlined in statute. Key to our mandate is identifying and understanding root causes of disproportionality and disparity in the system. This bill empowers the Commission through the provision of resources to better identify, understand and address root causes of inequity in the child foster care system.

I urge you to vote yes on HB2505 because all children and families that DHS Child welfare deserve equitable high-quality service.