

Submitter: Amanda Holguin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB548

Senator Gelsler Blouin ,Vice Chair Robinson and committee members,

My name is Amanda Holguin. As a former foster parent in Josephine County for 3 years, I have experienced numerous placement processes where children were brought to me with very little in the way of personal belongings. During the years of 2016 and 2018, after seeing this first hand, I coordinated two fundraising events through the non-profit organization called Together We Rise, now known as Foster Love. I raised over \$10k for the purchase of 389 duffle bags. These bags were stuffed with a teddy bear, blanket, coloring book, crayons, snacks, socks, sippy cups, hygiene kit, story books and school supplies and then divided by age category.

These fundraisers outfitted every law enforcement patrol vehicle in Josephine County, the Josephine County Juvenile Shelter and the DHS Child Welfare office with duffle bags with the intent of distributing them throughout the community. During the first campaign in 2016, the bags were depleted within 6 months of donation, showcasing the need for a second fundraising event.

Providing a backpack, suitcase or duffle bag is a simple and immediate act of thoughtfulness to show a child not only do they have value, but what they put value in is respected also. On the contrary, a trash bag symbolizes something to be discarded. When children enter care, they often have very little personal effects to call their own. Why would we put those few things into something that symbolizes no value and is meant to be thrown out? Why would we treat their belongings any less than we treat our own?

As lawmakers, caring citizens, caseworkers and caretakers of children who meet the health and safety intervention criteria due to abuse or neglect; we should make every effort to limit additional mental or emotional trauma during the removal process.

I am a person of action. As I testify today in support of this bill, I pledge to continue fundraising efforts to help the ongoing supply of duffle bags for foster kids. If this bill becomes law, I will expand my efforts to see that I continue to help foster children in every county of Oregon feel valued and worthy of love and care at a most basic level.

Foster care is near to my heart. This past Christmas, I coordinated fundraising efforts with Our Foster Kids, Inc. to provide gifts for every foster child in Josephine County. Non-profit organizations such as this are a true resource to look to for help. The burden is light when shared by so many in our communities willing to give to little

ones in need.

The value of showing a child their worth in this world during a critical and uncertain time in their childhood, far outweighs the potential monetary cost to DHS for the implementation of such progress in the care and welfare of children.

Maya Angelou once told Oprah in a resonating interview, "When you know better, you do better." We can do better for the children entering into foster care by a simple and conscious act of providing luggage instead of trash bags. I ask you to read the written testimonies submitted by former foster children and to support SB548. What an easy and measurable win for the future of foster care in Oregon!

Respectfully,

Amanda Holguin

Resource: <https://www.togetherwerise.org/>
<https://ourfosterkids.com/>