

Monday, February 17, 2025

Chair Gelser- Blouin, Vice Chair Heard and members of the committee.

My name is Seema Steffany, and I am submitting this testimony in support of SB1016 which is related to Chapter 210 and amends to include clear language related to the use of trash bags in Oregon's foster care.

I am the Founder of Oregon's Project Never Again (PNA). A grassroots nonprofit organization that has fervently advocated for a No Trash Bag Policy in our state for years now. The result is SB548, Chapter 210 effective 1/1/24.

Oregon is one of the very first states in the nation that has established a law prohibiting the use of garbage bags in foster care. This is an advocacy that we at Project Never Again are proud of and utterly humbled by as we hear from countless former foster youth regarding their very own experiences using trash bags. Many who are now adults have expressed the anguish they felt. The helplessness and shame that came about as they were handed black trash bags to carry their belongings and asked to move to a foster home. Like no one cared and they too were simply just trash!

It is a heartbreaking reality for thousands of children in our nation, but Oregon has taken a step in the right direction. SB1016, helps to ensure that there is absolute clarity in language – that trash bags should never be used to transport a child's belongings through foster care and that this practice is not on a limited duration basis. We may not be able to prevent children from entering foster care as this is beyond our control, but we can at least extend them the dignity they deserve!

As minute as this request may seem, the use of trash bags in foster care carries implications far beyond a child's journey through foster care. This experience sticks with them, and it never leaves their heart. Maya Angelou said this best – *“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”*.

Please support SB1016 so we can reinforce our state's No Trash Bags in foster care policy.

This advocacy truly is about leaving a legacy for all who remain in foster care and all who will enter this system in time to come.

Thank you,
Seema Steffany, MHS