



Support Senate Bill 911
Senate Committee on Human Services
February 19th, 2025

Chair Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Arielle Hacker, and I am the Strategic Initiatives Coordinator at Prevent Child Abuse Oregon (PCA Oregon), a statewide nonprofit dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect through comprehensive, community-based strategies. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 911, which would provide vital assistance to transition-age foster youth and the independent living programs (ILPs) that support them.

Independent Living Programs (ILP) are essential for youth transitioning out of foster care, offering individualized, evidence-based services that address their unique needs.¹ These programs encompass a wide array of services, including resources to address: housing, education, mental and physical health, and employment support, all tailored to empower these young Oregonians as they step into adulthood.²

The urgency of this issue is underscored by the Oregon's 2023 Child Welfare Data Book, which reports that 7,282 children and youth spent at least one day in foster care, with 1,294 youth receiving ILP services.³ Notably, participation in ILP services increased by 11.68 percent from FFY 2022 to FFY 2023, which reveals the growing recognition of their importance and the need for these services in our state.⁴

Young people who age out of foster care in Oregon deserve comprehensive supports when transitioning from foster care, including the robust services provided by ILPs, as they are more likely to face daunting challenges compared to their peers. According to Chapin Hall, young people transitioning out of foster care are:

- less likely to enroll in or graduate from college,
- less likely to be employed or earn a living wage,
- more likely to experience homelessness or housing instability,
- more likely to become involved with the criminal/legal system, and
- more likely to be financially insecure.⁵

¹ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/independent-living-and-transitioning-foster-care/?top=1402>

² <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/supporting-young-people-aging-out-of-foster-care-through-independent-living-programs-and-supervised-independent-living-placements/>

³ <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/data/cwdata/cw-data-book-2023.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/data/cwdata/cw-data-book-2023.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/supporting-young-people-aging-out-of-foster-care-through-independent-living-programs-and-supervised-independent-living-placements/>

These research findings reveal a troubling reality: without comprehensive support during this critical transition, many young people experience significant barriers to achieving their full potential.

Our Executive Director at PCA Oregon served three years as a Child Protective Services Caseworker for the State of Oregon and shares the following reflections on these important services:

There is nothing more critical that we can do for foster youth who are transitioning out of the system than support them in that transition process. Young people who have experienced foster care have already experienced a high level of trauma, uncertainty and stress compared to those who have not. When we invest in transition support we are modeling we understand their circumstances and truly care about whether or not they succeed when they leave the system. Transition services are critical to ensure young people can access and retain the resources and opportunities that support job, life and other kinds of interpersonal skills needed to thrive in adulthood. These supports are also critical tools in breaking the cycle of abuse and preventing further harm.

At PCA Oregon, we partner with over 40 community-based organizations, state agencies, and advocacy coalitions to actualize our vision of an Oregon where all children and families can lead happy, purposeful lives with hope for the future. Achieving this vision requires a concerted effort to provide the necessary supports for young people aging out of foster care, including the wholistic services offered by ILPs.

SB 911 is not just legislation; it represents a lifeline for Oregon's youth transitioning out of foster care. By investing in these programs, we are investing in the future of our communities and ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your continued support of Oregon's children and families.

Sincerely,

Arielle Hacker

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Prevent Child Abuse Oregon

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