

Testimonial in Support of Senate Bill 736 (The "Know Your Rights" Bill)

Hello, my name is Tori Algee, and I am the founder of Project Family First, a nonprofit dedicated to reducing the disproportionate representation of Black children in foster care. Before founding PFF, I worked as a child protective services worker for Oregon Child Welfare, where I saw firsthand how the system operates—and where it fails families.

I want to thank the Senate Committee on Human Services for this opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 736, *Relating to Investigations of Child Abuse Involving Parents*, which I often call the "Know Your Rights" bill.

I urge you to pass this bill because parents deserve to know their rights when CPS investigates their family. From the moment the agency receives a report to the completion of the investigation, parents often go through the process completely unaware of their rights or without access to an advocate or legal representation. As legal scholar Dorothy Roberts points out, “vague definitions of neglect, unbridled discretion, and lack of training form a dangerous combination in the hands of caseworkers charged with deciding the fate of families.” Child welfare agencies wield immense power—power that can separate families based on little to no evidence of wrongdoing. Families need protections too, and this bill is a necessary step toward leveling the playing field.

CPS workers already carry an air of authority, but when they show up at a family’s home alongside the police, that authority becomes even more intimidating. Parents should not be left in the dark about their rights in these moments. This bill does not grant parents *new* rights; it simply ensures they are informed of the rights they already have. And we all know—rights mean little if you don’t know they exist.

This bill will benefit *all* families under CPS investigation, but it is particularly urgent for Black families, who are disproportionately represented at nearly every stage of the child welfare system—from hotline calls and founded reports to foster care placements, length of stay, and termination of parental rights. These disparities have been well-documented for decades, yet little has been done to address them.

Families should not have to navigate this process blindfolded. They deserve transparency, they deserve fairness, and above all, they deserve a fighting chance. I strongly urge you to pass the *Know Your Rights* bill.

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely ~Lord Acton

Thank you.



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