

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Dear Chair Hartman and members of the committee,

My name is Seema Steffany. I am the Founder of [Oregon's Project Never Again](#). A grassroots nonprofit organization that was established with a sole mission to eliminate the use of trash bags for children in our state's foster care. Our community has extended 20,000 brand new duffel bags to children in Oregon's foster system since 2018 and these bags have always been sent directly to Child Welfare offices as this is where the practice of using trash bag begins. Perhaps a minute issue for someone who has never been in foster care carrying their lives in trash bags, but for a child in the system this matters!!! The act of removing children's belongings in black trash bags is convenient for case workers as many have expressed that the bags hold more items and it is readily available for employees, but how is this considered trauma informed care? On the one hand, workers are trying to build trust and make a child feel somewhat comfortable as they bounce between homes, yet by extending trash bags case workers are inadvertently saying that YOU DON'T MATTER!

SB 1016A amends SB548 which passed in 2023 and mandates a no trash bag policy for children entering/transitioning and exiting foster care. This amend was requested by Project Never Again to update the reporting language, removal of sunset and to reinforce overall language with clarity for all. This bill includes provision to allow the agency to use appropriate luggage carriers for large or soiled items that perhaps may not fit into duffel bags during removals. It is a matter of being creative, planning ahead and being coordinated with a clear message that trash bags cannot be the option for our children.

We clearly understand the agency has a lot of pressing issues that need their attention and a bill going forward with a mandate and reporting language is an added layer of work for all. This bill is not meant to be a punitive measure, but it helps set a foundation for expectations from an agency that has clearly resisted this change since its inception. In the absence of a law, the agency will continue to use trash bags, and the only suffering audience here are the children who carry their lives in garbage bags.

We humbly request your support for SB 1016A.

Seema