

Submitter: Sheila McGonigal  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1016

### Senate Statement for SB1016

Good Morning CHAIR HARTMAN and members of the committee. My name is Sheila McGonigal I am a former foster child here to testify in support of SB1016. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here and speak on behalf of children who have historically had no voice.

In 1965 I was placed in foster care after my Mother abandoned us. At the time I was 5 years old. We were picked up by Children Services Division as it was called back then. My first memory was of the trash bag that the few belongings I had were tossed into.

Trash bags were the transportation of choice every time I was moved from one placement to another. That of course, was if I left with anything more than the clothes on my back. This theme of trash bags continued until I aged out of the foster system in 1979.

Six decades, and I would like for the committee to hear that again, six decades after I entered the foster care system, DHS IS STILL transporting the belongings of our most vulnerable children and youth in a trash bag.

Before I graduated high school in 1979, and I was working. Out of my very FIRST paycheck I purchased 2 suitcases. I was determined to leave the foster care system with my few belongings in something appropriate, with my head held high. I moved out on my own the day after graduation with what I had in world in those two suitcases, with more dignity than I had been afforded in the 14 years in foster care being bounced through 7 foster placements.

If you look up trash bag in Webster's Dictionary online you will not find it. Instead you will see the word trash with this as the first line of the definition:

"Something worth little or nothing"

There is more to the definition words like junk; rubbish hopefully you get the picture.

This is how I felt every time I carried a trash bag with my possessions, like junk. As if being in the foster system and abusive homes weren't enough. The trash bag my belongings were put in took away any shred of dignity I had left.

There is NO circumstance in which a child in the care of DHS should have their belongings put in a trash bag. Trash bags are for trash, not for children's possessions which often is the only thing familiar they have left to cling to! Not 60 years ago and certainly not NOW! This bag I am holding is meant for trash not the few precious possessions most children and foster youth have. It's not for clothing or toothbrushes it is for TRASH!

If there is a need to clean clothing for the children seal them in a tote. Then return

the cleaned belongings back to the children in an appropriate duffel or backpack but not a trash bag.

DHS needs to be held accountable to provide an appropriate means of transporting the belongings of those in our foster care system.

I'd like to read one of my favorite quotes from Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy:

It has been said that time heals all wounds. I don't agree. The wounds remain. Time, the mind, protecting its sanity covers them with some scar tissue and the pain lessens, but is never gone.

In closing it's been 60 years since I entered the foster system and 45 years since I left foster care. Why are we not doing better by the one of the most vulnerable populations in our state? We can do better and we should do better. These kids deserve better.....I whole heartedly support SB1016.