

Submitter: Calli Ross
On Behalf Of: Advocates for Disability Supports
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835
Chair Bowmen, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Calli Ross, and I am writing today in strong opposition to the -5 amendment to HB 3835. While this bill was initially introduced under the guise of protecting youth in state care, the -5 amendment undermines that very goal and introduces dangerous regressions in oversight, accountability, and child safety.

The -5 amendment explicitly opens the door for Oregon to resume sending vulnerable youth to out-of-state facilities. Facilities with deeply troubling track records of abuse, neglect, and even death. The recent, tragic death of 12-year-old Clark Harman at Trails Carolina is not an isolated incident; it is emblematic of systemic failures in oversight and accountability that Oregon had previously taken steps to avoid. This amendment would reverse those efforts.

Beyond the threat of institutional abuse, the -5 amendment weakens mandatory abuse reporting and limits DHS's responsibility to investigate unless the alleged abuse occurs through a DHS-paid provider. This change effectively gives bad actors a free pass if the abuse is committed by someone outside that narrow definition—even if the child is in the state's custody. We should be expanding protective measures, not narrowing them.

The amendment also proposes to remove court oversight and judicial checks on DHS decisions, placing all discretion in the hands of a single agency without independent review. Children in state custody deserve due process. They deserve a system with checks and balances. Removing judicial review not only erodes public trust, but it also places our most vulnerable children in greater danger.

Additionally, legalizing harmful practices—such as restraint or seclusion—unless a child dies or is permanently disfigured is a staggering departure from trauma-informed care. This standard sets the bar for accountability impossibly high and effectively legalizes harm under the guise of treatment.

Finally, allowing DHS to place foster youth in homeless shelters—without a requirement to meet their mental and physical health needs—represents a fundamental abandonment of care.

Oregon has an obligation to ensure that children in its care are not just housed, but protected, supported, and given the opportunity to heal and thrive. The -5

amendment to HB 3835 does the opposite. It rolls back hard-won protections and exposes children to further trauma.

I urge you to reject the -5 amendment and work with stakeholders to craft legislation that truly centers the safety, dignity, and rights of Oregon's most vulnerable youth.

Thank you for your time,
Calli Ross