

Submitter: Lacey Andresen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835
Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Pham and Drazan, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and information on house bill 3835-A5.

In my initial employment with ODHS Child Welfare, I was a caseworker for about five years. During that time, I served children and young adults with complex and compounded trauma, mental and behavioral health needs, and developmental/intellectual needs. My next position was a unit supervisor, and the caseworkers assigned to my unit carried full caseloads of children and young adults, some of whom had been in foster care for multiple years and/or who experienced foster care multiple times.

In both of these roles, I spent time with children, young adults, and caseworkers who were feeling the impact of inadequate placement capacity, and I watched the trauma it caused. This issue is very personal to me. This foundational experience centered my knowledge and cemented my commitment to improving the child-serving system in this state, because I have first-hand knowledge of the lasting impact foster care has on children, young adults, and their parents; especially when they have complex needs that are unmet.

Fast forward to my current position: I serve as a Deputy Director in Child Welfare and my focus is quality outcomes and system integration, which gives me a unique perspective on the child serving system state-wide. I am not going to belabor the written and verbal testimony that is on the record. I want to make two points that my experience and position give me the qualifications to communicate:

1. First and most important, there are children and young adults in Oregon who are not getting their behavioral health needs met. There are children experiencing foster care- not because their parents are unsafe, but because their parents cannot get access to the services, supports, and placements that they need. Emergency rooms, detention facilities, and hotels with my staff are unacceptable places for them to sleep.
2. Second, two key pieces of my work are managing our compliance to the settlement agreement related to children and young adults being in temporary lodging like hotels (A.R. and B.C. v. DHS United States District Court Case No. 3:16-cv-01895-YY), and our work as part of the collaborative agreement that settled a class action lawsuit related to the foster care system (Wyatt B., et al. v. Tina Kotek, et al., U.S. District Court Case No. 6:19-cv-00556-AA). In order to achieve the

improvements that both of these agreements require, we need a robust, diverse service array for children and young adults. You have already heard and read testimony that the changes proposed by HB3835-A5 are a key component in our ability to create that array.

We must do better for children, young adults and families in Oregon, and this bill is one step to take toward that end. My commitment is that ODHS will implement those changes with transparency and thoughtfulness, in partnership with the other child-serving agencies and entities in this state. Children in our care deserve to experience safety while also having the opportunity to heal. I urge the Committee to pass HB3835-A5.