

Hello Chair Hartmann, Vice Chair Walters Ann Scharf and Members of the Committee:

My name is **Ashante Washington**, my preferred name is **Taye Washington**, I currently live in Tualatin, OR, and I am currently the Community Director of multiple Supportive Housing properties located in Downtown Portland that serves the Homeless and those with Mental Health and/or substance abuse challenges.

Additionally, I am a State Approved Affordable Housing Developer, the Founder of a 501c3 non-profit and I was recently offered the Director of Housing Development and Asset Management position for a wonderful nonprofit.

Today, I am here in support of House Bill 4059 as a mother whose children have currently been in ODHS foster care for **three years**—not because of harm that occurred, but because of the **current definition of “threatened harm.”**

I am also here as a **survivor of domestic violence**, and I want to be clear:

Under Oregon’s current law, DV survivors are often punished, ***instead of protected.***

Abusers, Old or Ex-Partners and Unsupportive Family members can and will weaponize old allegations, out-of-state incidents, and fear-based narratives ***to trigger*** CPS involvement—which is ***exactly*** what happened to my family

When my children were taken, **we were not Oregon residents**, I committed **no acts in the State of Oregon**, and yet **ten days after arriving from out-of-state for a family birthday party**, my children were gone.

The sole “threat of harm” used to justify removing and keeping my children was this:

That if my children were returned home, they might run away.

- Not that I abused them.
- Not that I neglected them.
- Not that there was imminent danger.

Just that they ***might*** run away.

And while the State claimed it was acting to prevent hypothetical harm, **the real harm occurred after removal:**

- My children went without beds and slept in a living room for 2.5 out of the 3 years
- March 2024 - My son ran away saying to call the Police and he was afraid to get the resource parent in trouble.
- May 2024 - My daughter overdosed on meds found in the home
- November 2024 - My daughter disclosed sexual abuse by a respite provider

- In February 2025, DHS documented that my daughter was leaving the home at night through the living room window, engaging in sexual activity in parks, and used condoms were being found in the household.
- In April 2025, ODHS administered a 23andMe ancestry test on my children and told my kids their fathers were not their fathers

At the same time, **my son—who has an IEP—has not received his required special education services for three full years while in care.**

And **my daughter has missed an alarming amount of school**, falling further behind academically while the State stood in place of the parent it removed.

Even more alarming, the resource parent has a **prior child cruelty conviction**, a **shooting occurred at the foster home only two years before placement**, and my current caseworker only last week, **witnessed the resource parent repeatedly threatening to kick my children out**, but described it as an “effective communication style.”

Had I done the same as their mother, it would have been labeled as abuse.

This is the danger of the current standards—they invite bias, and Black families like mine, bear the cost.

If the law being proposed had existed when my case began, my children would be home.

- They would have their own rooms and beds
- They would be educated.
- My son would be receiving his IEP services.
- And most of all, they would be safe.

I close with saying,” under the current bill -

As a Black Single Mother and Domestic Violence Survivor who had neither Oregon residency nor any incidents ever occurring within the State of Oregon,

Whose Home State came into my current open case and told the State of Oregon, if you send this case to us, the children are going home to their Mother same day because there is no grounds or facts for this case because the DV case we have is dismissed and Mom is great with the kids.

Oregon's response was “If you won’t keep the children, we will”

And with that - My case is still open (3) years later, and:

- I have never received a Safety Plan or TDM Meeting,
- I have never been referred for any services, and
- I have only been allowed to see my children (1) time in 3 years

Testimony Statement by Ashante Washington for 2/9/26

Solely due to “if my children are returned home, they ***might*** run away, which places them in risk of harm”

I urge you to pass House Bill 4059—not just for my family, but for every family whose future should not be decided by fear, bias, or guesswork.

Thank you.