

House Bill 1268

Good morning Chairman Senator Lee and Senate Human Service members,

My name is Mallory Waters and I have been doing foster care since 2024 and have had 9 children whom I have cared for, providing respite foster care and shelter care. I am a Pediatric Nurse at a local hospital, and my experiences lead me to becoming a foster parent. I have seen babies/children admitted to the hospital as a result of illegal drug use by parents.

Babies born addicted to illegal drugs, due to mothers' usage, are required to stay at the hospital for monitoring for a period of days following their birth. Despite the documentation done by nursing staff on parents behaviors, interaction with the baby, and time spent at the bedside many times these babies are sent home with parents without mandatory drug testing done. Children have also had to be admitted due to neglectful situations related to parental illegal drug use resulting in harm to the child. Having illegal drugs present in a home with children can lead to child accidental ingestion that could be lethal or cause long term effects on the child.

A child should not have to be subjected to this type of environment growing up. Having mandatory drug testing prior to unsupervised visits can be used as stepping stones along the way. This would show that parents are making progress in their sobriety journey, ultimately ensuring child safety, and a successful reunification.

Thank you for considering my testimony, I stand for questions at this time.

Mallory Waters