

Wolf, Sheldon

From: Lee, Judy E.
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 9:25 PM
To: -Grp-NDLA Senate Human Services; Wolf, Sheldon; NDLA, Intern 02 - Pouliot, Lindsey; Lahr, Pat
Subject: FW: HB1534

Message from mom of one who testified today.

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From: bgraner@bektel.com <bgraner@bektel.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 2:24 PM
To: Lee, Judy E. <jlee@ndlegis.gov>
Subject: HB1534

Greetings Senator Lee,

This morning I listened to the testimony on HB 1534.

I am Bailie Graner's mother in law and have been a witness to the life their family has lived while both fostering and adopting children in our state.

I have been retired from nursing for about 10 years. I worked over 20 years in maternal child health. Today I listened to testimony both for and in opposition to HB 1534.

I ask:

Why are foster families not scrutinized to the same degree adoptive families are assessed? Do the children not deserve and need a fully vetted family, a family who is capable of handling all the baggage that often accompanies any child removed from their birth family?

Is it because it is SO incredibly difficult to find families willing to open their homes as temporary placement as the child's family attempts to pull things together? Those placement days are often framed as we have a child or children who we need emergency placement for just a few days. Those few days in my experience often turn into weeks, months and years.

Those traumatized children need special care for their physical needs, their mental needs, and their often-horrible shattered little spirits. They are handed over to families who have completed the standard training to qualify for foster

care. I cannot help but ask, why is the bar set at different levels just because of the length of time the child may or may not be in ones home?

The other point that caught my attention is the admonition that the kids in foster care are under the custody of the state. That the state decides what should be done with them and for them. While, technically that is true, in reality the "state" is far too overwhelmed with the stark number of children that are assigned to them. The state does not really decide anything as they rarely see the child, really don't know the child, and fully depend on the reports/ communication with the foster parents in making any decisions. It is not the state that seeks health care, dental care, eye care, etc. It is the foster family who notices things are needing attention, who make the phone call to get "permission" to take the child for care. It is the foster family who potty trains the 4 year old still in diapers, it is the foster family who holds the 7 year old who has night terrors. It is the foster family who deals with undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions. The state may have legal custody, but they do not provide the day to day care, they subsidize it. They really are in a partnership with foster families. This bill asks that the system be assessed, that the present way of doing things be re-evaluated so that the best interests of the child are best met. It also seeks to make sure the money that makes this particular wheel turn be spent in a way that is financially prudent.

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