

Thank you Mr. Chairman. My name is Beth Norton and I am here on behalf of myself- a former foster child and current graduate student in the MPA Program at BSU. I would like to express my gratitude to the committee, OPE, Idaho Voices for Children and all other participating parties for bringing forth and studying this issue. I also want to thank the people at Health and Welfare who, everyday, tackle the seemingly impossible task of making the lives of abused and neglected children a little bit better. All your efforts give me a sense of profound hope and visibility. I want to speak in support of this bill. However, I also want to take this opportunity to ask you to look little further forward.

If there is one thing I have learned about this process in Public Administration 500, through the study of concepts, cases and theories is that decisions are made incrementally, based on the best options that publicly elected officials have on hand at the time and that the agreement and passing of a policy is its best measure of success. Each piece of legislature is not intended as an end all be all, this is just what we can accomplish right now and it will inform what happens later. This was coined as the branch method by Charles Lindblom, an economist, who actually passed away on January 30th of this year. The contrary is known as the root method- where an issue is studied, theory is applied, objectives are agreed upon, all possible solutions are introduced and POIs choose the ones that best serve the objective. This takes time and resources that are typically lacking and so we resort to this “muddling through process.” While this is more effective most of the time, when it comes to a systemic issue where catastrophe is impending, this method is ultimately futile. We looked at this in the case of hurricane Katrina, which had been predicted for decades and which incremental policy was made leading up to it which worsened the effect.

Which begs the question, Is child protection an impending disaster? To which I would argue- yes absolutely. An opioid crisis is coming this way and opioid addiction is by far the number one reason children are abused, neglected and end up in foster care.

I was severely abused at a very young age for a very long time by my family and then I lived the rest of my childhood in foster care and unless you have gone through that you can't imagine what sort of havoc it reeks. it is a betrayal that is hard to recover from because it rewires your brain and it shapes every interaction. Being removed is sometimes more terrifying and detrimental. It makes perfect sense to me why so many end up repeating the cycle of addiction and abuse. Its been almost 15 years since I emancipated out of the foster care system and outcomes are not much different today. Why? How much time and resources have gone into this issue since then federally and locally?

I don't assume that anyone here has an answer and I believe that everyone is doing the best they can with the resources given. I have had the opportunity to read the changes SB 1341 would make to the Child Protection act and believe these are all valuable steps in this process though it does sound like health and welfare might need some support to accomplish those goals. Specifically, I believe that preserving sibling connections and the installment of an oversight committee are powerful initiatives. What I believe to be the crucial next steps in this process are to ensure that any child who has suffered abuse and neglect receives high level therapeutic treatment for trauma and that foster

parents and biological parents are required to be trained on how to parent a child who has been traumatized to reduce the risk of further change of placement and to rebuild trust. Further I hope that the awareness of this as a larger issue needing more comprehensive study has stuck with you and that you continue to look forward on this issue and prepare. Thank you.

Beth Norton