



Office of Senator Sara Gelser Blouin

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Oregon Senate Passes Landmark Bill to Protect Assets of Foster Youth, Ending Years of Injustice

SALEM, Ore - Today, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 556](#), which prohibits the Oregon Department of Human Services from taking the assets that rightfully belong to children and youth in foster care, unless required by federal law. Instead, these funds will be set aside in a designated fund established by the State Treasury to be used for expenses like sports, music lessons, tutoring, uniforms, costumes, study abroad programs — essentially, anything that is not covered by ODHS while the young person is in foster care or for transition assistance when youth age out of care.

“This bill was inspired by a former foster youth named Oulu who reached out to me about her experience,” **said Senator Sara Gelser Blouin (D - Corvallis), the bill’s chief sponsor.** “After her father’s death, she was entitled to survivor benefits, but she never saw a penny of them. It turns out close to \$50,000 was taken from her by the state. She is now the mother of four children and has spent years struggling through poverty – working hard to keep her kids in safe housing and provided with nutritious food – while persevering to put herself through college. She has one year left before earning her Bachelor’s in Social Work. Access to her survivor benefits would have changed her and her children’s lives and allowed her to complete her education sooner.”

Oregon, like many states, has been taking children and youth in foster care’s assets for many years. This includes social security disability benefits, survivor benefits, disability payments, inheritances and more. When youth age out of care, they do not have access to those funds, even though they often live in poverty, experience homelessness and struggle to afford their most basic needs.

SB 556 is one of the hundreds of bills that Senate Democrats rescued by negotiating an end to the Senate Republican walkout. Thanks to Senate Democrats showing up, doing their jobs, and delivering results for the people of Oregon, SB 556 now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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