

Testimony in Support of HB 2216
Senate Human Services Committee
April 19, 2017

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, and members of the committee,

My name is Janelle Dreyer, I'm 17 and I have 2 brothers, Jared 19 Jon 20. Myself and my brothers went through foster care together at a young age. I first went into care at three months old in Colorado.

In 2007 I was fortunate to be adopted with them, still living in Colorado. The home that we were adopted to was not a good one and they ended-up separating us one at a time. First my brother John, then the next year Jared. I was left in that home for another year after that while my brothers moved to Oregon, yet still under guardianship of our adopted parents.

Finally, I moved to Oregon! I was excited to see them again but that didn't last long because I only saw John a week before I wouldn't see him for another 4 years and did not get to see Jared at all. When I first came to Oregon after staying with John for a week and our adopted dad, I was put in a group home and told that he would come get me in for days but he never came back and then I went back in the foster care. Around the same time, John and Jared went into foster care but we are all in different group homes.

I felt as if I was thrown in the water, I lost my best friends and my support. I was never notified or informed on where they were living or how they were doing. Later on, I was reconnected with my brothers through family therapy. I liked family therapy because it helped us feel more comfortable and less awkward. We would visit and talk about random things and just get to know each other again with some support. After completing family therapy, we can freely visit going to the mall or hanging out. Jared teaches me how cars work and how to have fun while John helps me understand responsibly. They help me feel stable and loved. I have been reconnected with them for about 2 years. Having this Sibling Bill of Rights, would have given me the option, idea, and empowerment to stand up and connect with them sooner.

I hope that if this bill (HB 2219) passes, for youth to have a tool and something to reach out on. We can inform others like case workers, attorneys and CASAs that they have the not only the option but the ability to do the same if wanted.

Janelle Dreyer
2017 Legislative Committee Member
Oregon Foster Youth Connection

Note from Jared: Our relationships would have been a lot stronger if we had reconnected sooner. The time we spent barred from each other has vastly affected the dynamic of our relationships within and between the three of us.