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Legislature Approves New Program Providing Registered Nurse Home Visits for Newborns

Bill creates program for registered nurses to visit and advise new parents

SALEM – Legislation that establishes a statewide, universally-offered home visiting program for families with infants up to six months old passed the Oregon House of Representatives today.

“Senate Bill 526 will expand the successful, evidenced-based Family Connects program over the course of several years until all new Oregonians and their parents have access to a home visit, regardless of socioeconomic status or insurance coverage,” said Rep. Sheri Schouten (D-Beaverton), a chief sponsor who carried the bill on the floor.

Under this legislation, families with new infants would be entitled to a home visit from a registered nurse, who could assist and consult with child welfare, maternal health, reducing family violence, and other essential services.

“Those of you who are parents know that babies don’t come with an instruction manual,” Schouten said. “Public Health nurse visitation is one of the most effective ways to fill in knowledge gaps and answer the sometimes-terrifying questions new parents have.”

Participation in the program would be optional, and nurses would be able to connect new parents to additional resources, including faith-based organizations, non-profits, or government-run programs. Advocates for the bill anticipate a 2:1 return on investment in the first year, due in large part to savings from emergency room visits.

Joining Rep. Schouten as a chief sponsor are Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Portland), Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena), and Rep. Duane Stark (R-Grants Pass). A bipartisan, bicameral group of 18 legislators signed on as a sponsor.

The bill, which passed 48 to 11, now goes to Gov. Kate Brown.

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