



# PRESS RELEASE

## OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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For Immediate Release  
June 26, 2020

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### **Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act Passes House** *Legislation codifies the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act in state law*

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon House of Representatives passed the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act today, legislation to ensure Native American children within Oregon’s foster care system are protected and cared for in culturally appropriate settings.

[House Bill 4214](#) modifies Oregon's dependency code to align with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and requires the Oregon Department of Human Services to provide biennial reports about American Indian and Alaska Native children in the child welfare system.

Rep. Tawna Sanchez (D-Portland), chair of the House Committee on Human Services, led the work group process that crafted the legislation and carried the bill on the floor.

“For too many Native children in Oregon, the care that they are receiving while in state custody is not culturally appropriate and out of compliance with federal law,” Rep. Sanchez said. “Following decades of destructive assimilation policies this legislation is long overdue. I commend the work of the workgroup that developed this legislation, and though I wish this had become law earlier this year, I am pleased that we were able to advance it today.”

ICWA is a federal law created “to protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children from their families and the placement of such children in foster or adoptive homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture.”

Ongoing challenges with ICWA compliance and an over-representation of Native American children in the foster care system precipitated the work group process. As of 2018, American Indian and Alaska Native children represented 4.8 percent of children in Oregon’s foster care system even though they only made up 1.6 percent of the state’s population.

The legislation will promote Native American children's continued connection to culture, family, and tribe, along with aiding in the state's efforts to ensure that courts are consistently adhering to the protections and rights afforded under ICWA here in Oregon.

The bill passed the chamber unanimously and now advances to the Senate for consideration.

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