House passes bill ensuring better oversight and accountability on IT projects

SALEM – Today the Oregon House of Representatives passed new safeguards to prevent problems like those seen with the Cover Oregon rollout from happening again.

House Bill 4122 requires an Independent Quality Assurance review for all public IT contracts that are over $5 million and other public IT contracts that meet specific requirements. In order to make sure the additional oversight leads to appropriate action, the bill also requires that the reports are sent to people who can review them promptly and then do something about any problems that are identified.

"We don't want the report to go only to someone who's just going to stick it in a drawer," said Rep. Nancy Nathanson (D- Eugene), a chief co-sponsor of the bill with Reps. Paul Holvey (D – Eugene) and Mitch Greenlick (D – Portland). "This bill would help ensure that significant projects have the oversight they need to keep things from going south, or at least to make a mid-course correction that would straighten them out."

Because of technical problems with the Cover Oregon website, thousands of Oregonians have signed up for health insurance by going around the exchange and directly to private insurers. Legislative Democrats are pushing for impacted Oregonians to receive the tax subsidies they're due (one of several fixes within another measure, HB 4154), while also taking these steps to help the state hold its technology vendors accountable for delivering results.

"We're using every tool we have to get Cover Oregon back on track," House Majority Leader Val Hoyle (D – Eugene) said. "At the end of the day, our goal is to make sure Oregonians can get the affordable, quality health coverage they need."

HB 4122 passed the House 40-18 and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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