



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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House Passes Bill Eliminating Spiritual Treatment as a Defense for Crimes against Children

SALEM – The Oregon House of Representatives today passed HB 2721, eliminating the reliance on spiritual treatment as a defense for crimes against children. HB 2721 repeals the remaining religious exemptions for parents or guardians pertaining to medical care of sick children.

State Representatives Carolyn Tomei and Dave Hunt, both from Clackamas County, are chief co-sponsors of the bill, along with Representative Mitch Greenlick. Other sponsors include Representatives Jeff Barker, Margaret Doherty, Lew Frederick, Sara Gelser, Chris Harker and Tobias Read. The bill passed unanimously.

“Children are suffering and dying from easily treatable illnesses,” said Rep. Tomei (D-Milwaukie). “When you visit the graveyard and see all those children’s names, it’s time to say enough is enough.”

In recent cases out of Clackamas County, two children have died and another was seriously disfigured. Each of these children had treatable medical conditions, but their parents did not seek treatment, instead relying solely on spiritual remedies.

“As someone who has fought for years to expand religious freedoms, I believe we cannot allow children in our community to die or suffer needlessly because their parents refuse to treat them when proper medical treatment is just around the corner,” said Rep. Hunt (D- Clackamas).

“This bill is about protecting kids, not punishing parents. My hope is that this bill will prevent a child from being denied medical care by their parents week after week, despite the fact that the child is in dire need of medical attention,” said Rep. Greenlick (D-Portland/Washington County).

The last changes to our laws came in 1999. Along with Clackamas County District Attorney John Foote, Rep. Tomei and Rep. Hunt have crafted this measure to hold all parents to the same standard of care for their children and protect all children equally.

The bill is supported by the Oregon District Attorney Association, the Oregon Medical Association and many more. It now goes to the Senate for approval.

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