



OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

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Contact: Greg Stiles, 503.986.1009

greg.stiles@oregonlegislature.gov

DHS is back in the headlines for all the wrong reasons

More unreported deaths and child welfare workers having sex witnessed by a foster child

SALEM, Oregon – Tragedy after tragedy on the Department of Human Services' watch leads to question after question. Why are so many deaths going unreported? What other measures has DHS failed to take? How many ill-advised steps have those agencies taken with no explanation?

Children are our state's future. For DHS to avoid a public explanation is not only calloused and uncaring but demeaning to the Oregon families who rely on its mandated role to protect these children.

On the heels of unreported deaths, the agency finds itself being sued because DHS employees had sex in the presence of a foster child in Polk County. Each new report calls into question DHS leadership, methods, operations and accountability. Oregonians need an explanation and their government must be held accountable.

DHS is charged with overseeing programs that protect children from abuse and neglect. But those elements are just part of the agency's role. To assume the mere absence of abuse and neglect – the standard by which DHS must report -- doesn't explain why DHS failed to perform its statutory duties.

House Republicans have already asked for an independent investigation into DHS' handling of an infant's death that went unreported for six months. The two previously unreported deaths of a 10-year-old and infant in 2017 underscore the need for an investigation in DHS' operations and transparency required by law.

Oregon families need to know state agencies are providing all the information that can help parents and relatives protect their children.

"For those of us with children and grandchildren, whenever a child dies it pierces our hearts," said House Republican Leader Rep. Carl Wilson (R-Grants Pass). "Parents and families deserve more in the wake of the tragic losses we've seen."

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