



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

March 21, 2017

CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov

Senate supports fair prioritization for adoptive parents

SB 830 expands definition of 'current caretaker' of foster children

SALEM – The Oregon Senate voted today to allow children to be adopted by significant adults in their lives with whom they've built long-term attachments.

Senate Bill 830 – which passed by a 27-0 vote on the Senate floor – modifies the definition of a foster parent who is a “current caretaker” to include the cumulative amount of time caring for a child, rather than the 12 consecutive months currently required. A current caretaker is considered with equal weight to biological relatives by an adoption committee.

“Adoption is about ensuring that kids find forever homes with people who love them. Relationships are built through experience and attachment, and that does not always involve biology,” said sponsor Sen. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis). “This bill ensures that when a child is being adopted, the committee is able to consider the strength of the relationship between a child and their long-term foster parents, rather than eliminating them from consideration on the basis of biology. Kids often do better with non-related individuals they know and love than with strangers who happen to share a biological connection. It’s just common sense.”

The new definition would include someone who currently is caring for a child or who has cared for a child or the child’s sibling for 12 cumulative months, instead of 12 consecutive months. The same would apply to foster parents who have cared for a child for one half of the child’s life or the child’s sibling’s life, cumulatively, if the child is younger than 2.

Currently, the Department of Human Services administrative rules define a “current caretaker” as a foster parent who has a long-term relationship with a foster child. Statute defines a “current caretaker” as a foster parent who currently cares for a child in custody of DHS that has

a permanency plan or concurrent adoption plan; and who has cared for the foster child or the child's sibling for the previous 12 consecutive months, or has cared for the child or sibling for at least half of the child's or sibling's life when the child is younger than 2.

The current language only includes consecutive months of care, which can cause a foster parent who provided long-term care, but had a gap in that timeframe, to lose priority adoption status, despite the length of time spent caring for the child. SB 830 fixes that by allowing a cumulative calculation of a foster parent's time spent caring for the child or the sibling.

SB 830 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###