



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Bill establishes rights for foster children's siblings *HB 2216 creates 'Oregon Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights'*

SALEM – A bill to establish the “Oregon Foster Children’s Sibling Bill of Rights” will go to Gov. Kate Brown for signature.

House Bill 2216 – which passed by a 29-0 vote on the Senate floor today – directs the Oregon Department of Human Services to adopt rules for establishing this document and review the rules periodically, promoting participation by current and former foster children in developing the rules.

“Our relationship with our brothers and sisters is one of the most significant relationships we have across the lifespan,” said Sen. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis), who carried the bill in the Senate. “For too many foster youth, this relationship is disrupted by the very system intended to support them. HB 2216 reasserts that children and youth are the center of the child welfare system, and that their basic rights include the right to maintain their connection to the people who know them best – their siblings. Preserving and celebrating sibling relationships is a common-sense priority that will now be recognized by law.”

Oregon enacted the Foster Parent’s Bill of Rights and Foster Children’s Bill of Rights in 2005 and 2013, respectively. The bills codify and inform foster children and foster parents of their rights within the child welfare system. The Foster Children’s Bill of Rights includes, among other provisions, the right to be safe, the right to have contact with certain people, the right to be healthy, to learn, to be informed and to make decisions. Similarly, the Foster Parent’s Bill of Rights includes the right to be treated with dignity, as part of a team and to be informed, among other provisions.

House Bill 2216 takes another step on behalf of siblings by directing DHS to establish the rights of siblings. It outlines essential rights for siblings who are foster youth, including placements together, communication guidance and training for foster parents and child caring agencies on sibling relationships. The measure also establishes legislative policies that siblings in foster care should be involved in developing sibling contact plans, that foster children should receive a document outlining their rights and that they may request the foster youth's attorney advocate for contact and visitation with siblings.

HB 2216 now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for signature.

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