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Oregon Senate votes to end isolation punishment for youth *SB 82 bans Oregon Youth Authority from placing youth in locked rooms alone*

SALEM – Oregon Youth Authority would be required to stop using isolation as a punishment, under a bill passed today by the Oregon Senate.

Senate Bill 82 – which passed 29-0 on the Senate floor – establishes a state policy that prohibits the Oregon Youth Authority from punishing youth offenders or any other person under the agency’s custody by locking them up in solitary confinement.

“We know that locking any person up in isolation as punishment is harmful to them mentally and emotionally,” said Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “These are vulnerable kids, anyway, and then using a punishment technique like that naturally hurts more than it helps.”

For about two years, OYA has worked to reduce and prevent using isolation as punishment, forming internal and external work groups to look at the issue. OYA also began an initiative to focus on teaching youth offenders the skills they need to live productive and positive lives. While it had been against OYA policy to use isolation as punishment, the authority recently lined up its actual practices with the policy. SB 82 would codify into law OYA’s policy prohibiting using isolation as a sanction or punishment. The bill also expands the existing law to include anyone in the custody of OYA, and not just youth offenders.

SB 82 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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