



OFFICE OF SENATOR SARA GELSER BLOUIN

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Ensuring Access to Mental Health Care for Youth Under 21

SALEM, Ore. — Today, [Senate Bill 1557](#) referred to as The Culture of Yes, passed the Oregon Senate with bipartisan support. The legislation paves the way towards a robust package of services that will allow children and youth with significant mental illness to thrive in the community without needing to leave their parents' care.

“For years, I’ve heard Oregon families tell heartbreaking stories of asking for help supporting their mentally ill children only to be told no, over and over again either because their kids’ needs were too significant, or not significant enough,” said **Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin (D-Corvallis)**, chief sponsor of SB 1557. “The Culture of Yes will change that by ensuring Oregon kids and youth have access to the community based support, treatment and training that they are promised under federal law. This means fewer kids boarding in emergency rooms, fewer kids being placed in foster care, fewer kids in the juvenile justice system and fewer kids entering adulthood without housing, hope or family.”

SB 1557 creates a roadmap for the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Human Services to access substantial federal funds to provide kids with complex needs 1:1 support at home and in the community. These funds will also provide respite care for families, help with medication costs and even training to kids, their parents and siblings about how to successfully live with a chronic mental illness. The federal government will pay for over 70% of the cost of these services.

SB 1557 prohibits providers and agencies from providing access to mental health services to children and youth on the basis that they also experience an intellectual or developmental disability or an addiction. The law requires youth have simultaneous access to supports that

meet their many needs. It also requires OHA to make any needed changes in contracts and rules to ensure continuity of care for kids in foster care who move between communities and ready access to assessments necessary to access services. Additionally, the measure will result in recommendations to maximize Medicaid funding for school based services for students with disabilities, potentially drawing tens of millions of additional funds into Oregon schools.

“The Culture of YES is a fresh start for Oregon kids and families. Once fully implemented, the system of wrap-around community supports envisioned by SB 1557 for kids that struggle with mental illness will strengthen families, reduce pressure on schools, hospitals and our foster care system,” said **Gelser Blouin**. “Most importantly, passage of this measure tells our kids that they matter and the state is willing to make the investments necessary to ensure their success and wellbeing. They deserve nothing less.”

SB 1557 is a key part of Senate Democrats’ [Uniting Oregon Agenda](#), which aims to get Oregonians the help they need when they need it.

The bill now goes to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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