



# SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Priority health care, early learning bills approved in Senate**

*Health Insurance Exchange & Early Learning Council head to Governor's desk*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate took action today on two major policy initiatives of the 2012 Session. House Bill 4165 implements the Early Learning Council, which will help coordinate resources and programs that serve Oregon's youngest learners, ages 0-6. House Bill 4164 approves the business plan of the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange, an important step toward increasing access to quality, affordable health insurance for small businesses and individuals.

“Both the Early Learning Council and the Health Insurance Exchange are two landmark accomplishments of the 2012 short session,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “The Early Learning Council will help ensure that kids are ready to learn when they start school while making sure resources to serve them are coordinated and delivered efficiently. Implementation of the Health Insurance Exchange is a major step for Oregon as we continue to serve as a national model for health care reform that will provide better care at more affordable cost for Oregon small businesses and individuals. Both bills have the enthusiastic support of advocates, stakeholders, and the business community because they will help us reach the goals of better health for Oregonians and better prepared students.”

HB 4165 will eliminate the State Commission on Children and Families and replace it with the more focused Early Learning Council (ELC). The ELC will reorganize policies, administration, and planning for the various commissions and agencies governing early childhood programs, placing them under a central council. This council will work to improve accountability and coordination to guarantee our children enter school ready to read and learn.

“As a lifetime educator and advocate for our kids, I know these are meaningful reforms that will help the state deliver better results for students,” said Senator Rod Monroe (D-Portland), co-chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education. “Investments made in our youngest learners have many benefits down the line for our students' graduation rates, our crime rate, and our ability to educate the workforce of the future.”

The other major initiative approved today takes the next step in implementing Oregon's Health Insurance Exchange, as required by the federal Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act of 2010. HB 4165 will help improve access to and bring down costs of health coverage by providing a central marketplace where individuals and small businesses can shop for health insurance plans. Oregonians will be able to easily compare plans, find out if they are eligible for tax credits and other financial assistance, and enroll in

coverage through the Exchange website.

“The Exchange will empower Oregonians by giving them the information they need to make health insurance choices that meet their needs and values,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), chair of the Senate Health Care, Human Services, and Rural Health Policy Committee. “By building our own exchange, Oregon can ensure that this tool meets the state’s unique needs and insurance market.”

Both bills are major policy priorities for Governor John Kitzhaber. They now go to his desk for approval.

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