



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Cultural competency health standards bill clears final vote

HB 2611A outlines next steps for greater awareness of health care disparities across minority groups

SALEM – A bill that addresses the disproportionate health problems faced by minority communities passed in the Senate this morning, with a 26-2 vote with two excused. House Bill 2611A establishes the protocol and next steps for creating cultural competency standards for Oregon’s health professional regulatory boards.

“The evidence shows clear health disparities in minority communities,” said Senator Chip Shields (D-Portland), a chief sponsor of HB 2611A. “We can work to close these gaps by adequately preparing health care providers to identify and address cultural barriers to quality care.”

Research has shown that training in cultural competency improves the skills and knowledge of health care providers, enabling them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Generally, cultural competency in health care is defined as a set of provider skills, provider communication strategies, and institutional policies that come together with the goal of improving care and outcomes.

Oregon has seen a steady increase in the diversity of the state’s population, with 20 percent of Oregonians currently identifying as Latino or non-white according to 2011 American Community Survey data.

“Training for cultural competency will improve Oregon’s health care delivery system so that we can address the diverse needs of our rapidly-changing population,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), chair of the Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee. “As Oregon becomes more diverse, House Bill 2611A will help us make sure everyone in Oregon is getting quality health care.”

Specifically, HB 2611A requires the Oregon’s health care professional regulatory boards to develop standards for continuing education in cultural competence. The bill also instructs the Oregon Health Authority to develop a list of opportunities for continuing education so that providers have a variety of sources for proper cultural training.

“Implementing cultural competency standards is a key part of making health care more effective,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Senate Democrats will continue our efforts to strengthen Oregon’s health care workforce in order to provide greater access to affordable, preventative care.”

The bill now goes to Governor John A. Kitzhaber for his signature.

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