



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Legislation will help protect Oregon's most vulnerable in foster care
Two bills address standards of care in foster home or residential facilities

SALEM – Two bills that address foster care for Oregon children and vulnerable adults passed in the Senate this afternoon. House Bill 3114 addresses issues of overmedication of kids in the foster care system. House Bill 2442 standardizes investigations of misconduct and abuse and increase penalties for long-term care facilities where abuse occurs.

“All session long we’ve been dedicated to looking out for the most vulnerable Oregonians in our state,” said Deputy Senate Majority Leader Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham). “Our track record has been strong and, as we close out this session, these are good bills that will help people in significant ways.”

HB 3114 requires the Department of Human Services to develop procedures for children in foster care to receive an assessment from a mental health professional before being prescribed multiple psychotropic or antipsychotic medications. The legislation was prompted by reports in 2007 of overly medicated foster children whose health was being compromised by fragmentation in the medical and behavioral health systems.

“We have a special obligation to make sure that we are looking out for the well being of the children in our state’s foster care system,” said Senator Alan Bates (D-Ashland), who carried the bill on the floor. “If these kids require multiple medications, there needs to be oversight of how the drugs interact and the effect they have on the quality of life of a child.”

HB 2442 creates the Quality Care Fund, standardizing abuse investigations, increasing collaboration between the Department of Human Services and local law enforcement agencies, and allowing for immediate notification of all residents of a facility when a substantiated abuse has occurred. The bill will also preclude individuals with felony convictions and crimes against vulnerable people from being hired as direct care providers. For the first time in decades, fines and civil penalties for substantiated abuse will be increased and redirected into a fund to improve training of care providers.

“We are strongly committed to improving the quality of care for Oregon’s most vulnerable populations,” said Senator Bill Morrisette (D-Springfield). “More than 5,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities are in foster care or residential facilities in the state. HB 2442 will provide greater consistency in training and investigations of these homes.”

HB 3144 was sponsored in the House by Representative Tina Kotek (D-Portland) and Representative Carolyn Tomei (D-Milwaukie). HB 2442 was sponsored by Tomei and Representative Sara Gelsler (D-Corvallis). Both bills now go to Governor for his approval.

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