



State Representative Greg Smith

House District 57

*Serving Union, Wallowa, Umatilla,
& Morrow Counties*

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Smith Helps Children With Mental Health Problems

(Salem) [State Representative Greg Smith](#) (R-Heppner) is introducing legislation to help children in Eastern Oregon with mental health problems. He helped draft Senate Bill 604 because he noticed, “there is a big disparity in state support for these children east of the cascades compared to those on the west side.”

SB 604 would set aside money in the state General Fund for the [Department of Human Services](#) to provide psychiatric day treatment specifically for eastern Oregon children. One of the leading organizations, [Pendleton Academies in Pendleton](#), could get funding through this legislation. Pendleton Academies serves children between 6 and 17 years old.

Smith pointed out, “local school districts often don’t have the level of expertise and other resources to help children with serious behavior or mental health disorders.” Pendleton Academies is a non-profit company which has been around for 10 years, providing educational, day treatment, and residential psychiatric services to help children and their families.

According to state figures, of the more than 200 day treatment slots available statewide, only 7 are in Eastern Oregon. “I’m concerned that once again our side of the state is not getting the same level of service,” explained Smith. “Hopefully this new bill will help bring back some parity for Umatilla, Morrow and other Eastern Oregon counties.”

Last year [Pendleton Academies](#) built a new clinic and therapeutic school. They provide intensive psychological treatment so kids can be successful in school, at home and in the community without the need for long term residential services or incarceration. Currently school districts pay Pendleton Academies \$55 a day for each child but that doesn’t come close to paying for the actual costs of treatment. The new legislation will serve children who don’t have private insurance to cover their mental health needs and those who don’t qualify for the Oregon Health Plan.

State Senator Dave Nelson (R-Pendleton) and State Representative Bob Jenson (R-Pendleton) are also Co-Chief Sponsors on this legislation.

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