

HB 2216 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Gelser

Senate Committee On Human Services

Action Date: 04/24/17

Action: Do pass the A-Eng bill.

Vote: 4-0-1-0

Yeas: 4 - Dembrow, Gelser, Monnes Anderson, Olsen

Exc: 1 - Knopp

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Department of Human Services (DHS) to adopt rules establishing the "Oregon Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights." Directs DHS to review the rules periodically and promote participation of current and former foster children in developing the rules.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Role of siblings in family stability for foster youth
- Consideration of sibling placement and contact in foster care decisions
- Implementation and enforcement mechanisms for "bill of rights"
- Current sibling placement procedures

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2013 and 2005 Oregon enacted the Foster Children's Bill of Rights and the Foster Parent's Bill of Rights, respectively, to codify and inform foster children and foster parents of their rights within the child welfare system. The Foster Children's Bill of Rights includes, among other provisions, the right to be safe, the right to have contact with certain people, to be healthy, to learn, to be informed, and to make decisions. Similarly, the Foster Parent's Bill of Rights includes the right to be treated with dignity, as part of a team, and to be informed, among other provisions.

House Bill 2216-A takes another step in this vein on behalf of siblings, directing the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish the Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights. It outlines essential rights for siblings who are foster youth, including placements together, communication guidance, and training for foster parents and child caring agencies on sibling relationships. The measure also establishes legislative policies that siblings in foster care should be involved in developing sibling contact plans, that foster children should receive a document outlining their rights, and that they may request the foster youth's attorney advocate for contact and visitation with siblings.