



# Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

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Date: March 16, 2011

TO: The Honorable Carolyn Tomei, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Vic Gilliam, Co-Chair  
House Human Services Committee

FROM: Erinn Kelley-Siel, Acting Director  
Department of Human Services  
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SUBJECT: HB 2053 – Equity Task Force Bill



Co-Chair Tomei, Co-Chair Gilliam, members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Erinn Kelley-Siel, Acting Director for the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Assistant Director for Children, Adults and Families (CAF). I am here to testify in support of HB 2053 regarding equity of services for clients in the Oregon child welfare system.

The Division of Children, adults and Families (CAF) provides services to clients that include program areas such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps, Child Welfare and Vocational Rehabilitation, among others. Approximately 4800 field staff provide these services to clients through more than 100 field offices located throughout the state of Oregon. We also work closely with local providers, courts and stakeholders to help deliver a range of services to support children and families and to help keep them safe and stable. HB 2053 focuses on the child welfare program area in CAF.

On February 11, 2009, the Governor signed Executive Order No. 09-02 and in 2009, the legislature passed SB 630. The Executive Order and SB 630 created a task force to research information, study causes and make recommendations to the legislature regarding how to eliminate racial disproportionate representation in the child welfare foster care system. The task force first met on May 20, 2009, and continued to meet regularly through October 29, 2010. The task force reviewed data, reviewed research,

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heard national presenters and heard from a variety of Oregonians who experienced child welfare services.

The result of this task force is a comprehensive report presented to the legislature on this day. We have representatives from the Task Force here today who support HB 2053 and who will discuss this report and answer questions you may have regarding the process used by the Task Force, the membership of the Task Force and the Task Force Report and recommendations.

HB 2053 is a product of the Equity Task Force. HB 2053 is proposed legislation that institutionalizes some of the recommendations coming from the Equity Task Force. Specifically, the proposed legislation requires the department to do the following three things:

1. Requires DHS to provide a racial impact statement to the legislature for legislative bills impacting child welfare clients in Oregon;
2. Requires DHS to provide child welfare data about race and ethnicity to the legislature biennially; and
3. Requires the department to provide culturally specific services to clients receiving child welfare services.

In 2009, 13,291 children spent at least one night in foster care as a result abuse or neglect. Within this number, Native American children in Oregon entered foster care at a rate 4.4 times higher than would be expected given the number of Native American children in the general population. African American children in Oregon entered foster care at a rate 3.1 times higher than would be expected given the number of African American children in the general population. 2010 saw some improvement in those data (fewer Native American children spent time in foster care, and rate of entry of African American children decreased by 8%), but both population groups continue to be over-represented in our system.

Oregon has begun efforts to safely and equitably reduce these foster care numbers. Currently, we have a partnership with the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, the Casey Foundation and numerous community

stakeholders, including our judicial courts, to develop strategies and goals to safely reduce the number of children in foster care. As part of that effort, we have included specific strategies to be sure that, as foster care in Oregon is safely reduced, all children and families benefit from that reduction.

HB 2053 establishes an additional cornerstone in the foundation for the department, community stakeholders and Oregon leaders to better meet goals to safely reduce minority racial and ethnic over-representation in foster care.

Section 1 requires the department to provide to the legislature a racial impact analysis for any proposed child welfare legislation that may impact communities of color. By the department providing the legislature with a racial impact statement for legislation impacting child welfare, the legislature will know before voting how a particular piece of legislation may impact a minority population. In producing the racial impact analysis, we envision the analysis will include input from DHS staff and individuals from communities of color. This racial impact analysis will be submitted to the legislature along with a fiscal analysis, which is already required, and will be submitted before any committee hearings take place. We have estimated this part of the legislation will have a minor fiscal impact to the department of \$195,817 in 2011-2013.

Section 2 adds race and ethnicity to a list of child welfare data points already provided by the department to the legislature. By providing the legislature with regular child welfare data about race and ethnicity, the legislature will have the most current information the department has at the time to evaluate progress of initiatives to reduce over-representation of minority children in foster care and allow legislators to use the data in their legislative decisions. Since the department already provides a child welfare data report to the legislature and since the department already collects the race and ethnicity data, adding this data to the existing report will have no fiscal impact to the department.

Finally, Section 3 requires the department to monitor how contractors using state child welfare contracted funds use those funds in culturally specific and appropriate ways for the department's clients. We believe this concept does

two things: First, this ensures minority populations get needed and appropriate resources and, second, these culturally specific resources will help the department achieve positive outcomes related to safely reducing the over-representation of minority populations in foster care. This part of the legislation does not have a fiscal impact, since the department already monitors contracts for specific outcomes.

The department requested and received the dash 1 amendments. This amendment simply clarifies the initial intent for Section 3 of the bill. This amendment still requires the department to monitor how contractors using state child welfare contracted funds use those funds in culturally specific and appropriate ways for the department's clients.

Although HB 2053 represents a very small part of the great work completed by the Equity Task Force, we are hopeful the legislature will move this bill with the dash 1 amendments to the floor with a unanimous "do pass" recommendation to show support to the task force and to the department's efforts at safely reducing minority over-representation in foster care.

Thank you for your time and willingness to hear this bill. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.