

Seventy-Eighth Oregon Legislative Assembly - 2015 Regular Session
STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
House Committee On Judiciary

MEASURE: HB 2358

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 03/02/15

Action: Do Pass And Be Referred To Ways And Means By Prior Reference

Meeting Dates: 02/23, 03/02

Vote:

Yeas: 9 - Barker, Barton, Greenlick, Krieger, Lininger, Olson, Post, Sprenger, Williamson

Prepared By: Channa Newell, Counsel

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Creates pilot program to reduce use of foster care through improvements to juvenile dependency proceedings. Requires: 1) Public Defense Services Commission to contract with attorneys to represent children and families in pilot program counties; 2) Department of Justice to employ attorneys to represent Department of Human Services in juvenile dependency proceedings; and, 3) independent evaluation of each pilot program. Makes legislative findings. Makes appropriation for funding of pilot program. Ends pilot programs on June 30, 2021. Declares emergency; effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Provisions of House Bill 3363 (2013)
- Efforts of Task Force on Juvenile Court Dependency Proceedings
- Non-statutory changes proposed by Task Force
- Implementation of Pilot Project
- Case load in juvenile courts
- Washington's Parents Representation Program resulted in greater adoption, guardianship, and reunification
- Determination of counties for participation

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2013, the Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 3363, which created an 11-member Task Force on Juvenile Court Dependency Proceedings. The Task Force was charged with reviewing the juvenile dependency system and to report to the legislature with recommendations. Specifically, the Task Force looked at the timely resolution of jurisdictional petitions, the bases for dependency jurisdiction, the development and implementation of case plans for reunification of families, the adequacy of case plans, and the identification and implementation of specific, understandable, and realistic conditions for the return of a child to a parent and the development of permanency plans. The Task Force made several recommendations in its report on actions that the represented groups could take under current law, and actions that could be implemented through statutory changes.

House Bill 2358 incorporates the statutory changes proposed by the Task Force. It creates a pilot program in four to six counties, including Linn and Yamhill counties, to evaluate whether increasing representation of children, families, and the Department of Human Services in dependency proceedings will reduce the use of foster care. Each county will be evaluated by an independent evaluator and a report to the Legislative Assembly will be required each odd-numbered year on the status of the pilot programs.