

SB 556 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

Prepared By: C. Ross, Counsel

Meeting Dates: 3/25, 4/1

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires site inspections of specified care facilities *in person*, with exceptions authorized by Governor during declarations of statewide emergency. Allows six-month extension of authorizations to operate that would otherwise expire during a statewide emergency, and requires in-person site inspection prior to renewal. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Critical importance of in-person, on-site inspections in ensuring transparency, safety, and quality of care
- Lack of any equivalent or substitute for in-person interaction: sights, sounds, smells, other cues, that help accurately identify issues
- Recent, necessary reliance on virtual contact; corresponding conversations around incorporating virtual contact more regularly or permanently in lieu of in-person contact

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

[-1 amendment dated 3/15/21] Narrows applicability to health care facilities, hospitals being investigated for nurse staffing complaints, hospice programs, home health agencies, residential facilities, residential care facilities, licensed adult foster homes, and qualified residential treatment programs. Removes references to statewide emergencies and executive orders.

[-2 amendment dated 3/23/21] Duplicates/incorporates -1 amendment and removes hospitals being investigated for nurse staffing complaints to avoid duplication.

BACKGROUND:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person contact evaporated or was severely restricted, between individuals in all manner of congregate settings and their providers, case workers, licensing and other professionals, and friends and family members. The Residential Facilities Care Ombudsman (RFO), responsible for advocating on behalf of more than 10,000 Oregonians that reside in 2,600 homes, estimates about half of all concerns that are raised about a person's care, come from the circle of people in direct physical contact with them. The RFO, the Department of Human Services (DHS), and others, report alarming declines in the number of formal complaints and reports of suspected abuse or neglect across the state in the absence of in-person interactions with individuals in congregate settings.

Senate Bill 556 specifies that site inspections of certain care facilities must be *in person*. It also provides for a six-month extension of authorizations to operate that would otherwise expire during a statewide emergency, and requires in-person site inspections prior to renewal.