

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON**  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**Subcommittee on Child Welfare**

**April 14, 2005 Gresham City Hall Council Chambers**

**6:00 P.M.    Tapes 3 - 5**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:            Rep. Billy Dalto, Chair**

**Rep. Debbie Farr**

**Rep. Mitch Greenlick**

**STAFF PRESENT:            Marjorie Taylor, Committee Administrator**

**Corina Alexander, Legislative Assistant**

**Pamella Andersen, Committee Assistant**

**MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:**

**HB 2010 – Public Hearing**

**Public Comment on Issues Related to Child Welfare**

**These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.**

<b>TAPE/#</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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**TAPE 3, A**

004	Chair Dalto	Calls the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Opens a public hearing on HB 2010.
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## **hb 2010 – PUBLIC HEARING**

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| 024 | Bernie Giusto  | Multnomah County Sheriff. Testifies in support of HB 2010. States the bill creates a framework for success. Relates incident of a toddler killed by her mother on a supervised visit, influencing him to determine how to prevent such things from happening again. Comments the system has not gotten better since that incident. Notes the demands on caseworkers are high, and even talented, committed people, when overworked, need oversight and management. States the system is not set up for success despite the caseworker commitment, and the intent of HB 2010 is to create the framework for the public and workers to receive needed support. Relates supervision appears to be an issue, and uncertainty has been created with the Department of Human Services (DHS) administrator moving to another position. Reports the bill creates independent oversight and will hold both the department and law enforcement more accountable. Relates other issues for which the Attorney General (AG) is now responsible. |
| 125 | Chair Dalto    | Inquires about the relationship of Multnomah County's law enforcement with caseworkers and how such a positive team has been created.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 135 | Giusto         | Replies the base of effectiveness is relationships that have been developed. Mentions value of single point of entry, and seeking to solve problems before they exist.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 171 | Chair Dalto    | Asks how that relationship can be replicated throughout the state.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 172 | Giusto         | Responds it has to come from the top down. States the methamphetamine problem may force child welfare agencies to draw closer and create a system of accountability that surfaces issues before they escalate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 194 | Rep. Greenlick | Discusses his experience on the hotlines, noting every case has a buried potential catastrophe and it would be easy to overlook one. Inquires how cues are filtered out of all the information.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 238 | Giusto         | States with supervisory experience and direction, discernment becomes ingrained in the agency psyche. Provides illustrations of significant factors. Mentions case development and the complication of caseworkers being reassigned at the last minute. States the agency is receiving assistance in developing an effective triage system. Gives example of the impact of sending a fax, rather than making a phone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

call with critical information. Notes the value of a multidisciplinary team.

372 Julie McFarlane Supervising Attorney, Juvenile Rights Project. Submits and reviews written testimony on HB 2010 as well as a legal agreement and report on *Improving Family Foster Care* (**exhibit a**).

#### **TAPE 4, A**

004 McFarlane Continues testimony. Makes recommendations to the committee on studies to research. States the AG has a conflict of interest, and should not be housing the oversight office.

052 Rep. Greenlick Inquires where the oversight office should be placed.

054 McFarlane States she has no recommendation other than it must be independent. Comments the Governor's Office could be considered, or within the legislature.

066 Chair Dalto Questions how important perception is compared to accomplishing the purpose.

068 McFarlane Responds it depends on the purpose of the office - to bring reform, or hear complaints.

082 Nancy Webb Vice President, Greater Metropolitan Foster Parent Association. Agrees county programs within Oregon are very different. Supports McFarlane's view the range and scope of authority for a truly independent agency would be missing in the AG office. Reports she does not want to support HB 2010 until that issue is resolved.

119 Lynn Davenport Former DHS employee. Relates background in social services and work with DHS. Supports the concept of oversight of the system, but reiterates the conflict of interest for the AG office. Recommends placing the office in the Secretary of State's Office as they do performance auditing. States when an agency is not delivering as intended, it is "stealing the money." Discusses necessary approvals for access to information, as well as the falsifying of dates on case records and the ethics of cases returning before they have been closed.

180 Rep. Greenlick Questions the possibility of falsifying records.

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| 187 | Davenport   | States her experience with both computer- and manually-generated dates. Recommends the presence of an experienced supervisor to add discernment for caseworkers, support those who are doing well and manage out those who are ineffective. Questions who is holding DHS accountable to make needed changes after the last two tragedies. Recommends more rigorous guidelines than federal standards and legislative accountability of the agency. States a child advocate policy coordinator is essential. Reports the caseworkers are often the most functional part of the system and need to be heard. |
| 322 | Chair Dalto | Closes the public hearing on HB 2010. Opens the meeting to public comment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**public comment on issues related to child welfare**

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| 335 | Chris Drefs  | Caseworker, DHS. Discusses the impact of increased caseloads, now 1.5 times larger than a full-time load. Notes impact of gangs and methamphetamine activities and the difficulty finding services to assist clients due to funding losses. Notes children are being placed outside her county due to lack of foster parents, resulting in half-day drives to meet with some children. Reports everything is always in crisis mode and is unstable. Discusses long work hours of 50-70 hours per week, increasing job burnout and propelling people to seek other employment. Relates low morale is due to media invasion. Recommends support positions be added to remove the paperwork burden. |
| 460 | Anne Bennett | Caseworker, DHS. Discusses shifts and changes in the nature of case work since her start with the department in 1979. Believes the quality of their work has improved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

**TAPE 3, B**

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| 003 | Bennett        | Continues testimony. Relates colleagues are committed, talented and educated, but need support staff. Reports the cases are more extremely severe and the kids are more damaged, adding to the intensity of the work. Gives an example. Mentions the out-of-state work they do. |
| 056 | Rep. Greenlick | Asks what else can be done, since there are no more resources.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 077 | Bennett        | Relates the funds wasted in training caseworkers that leave shortly afterward. Recommends apprenticing new workers rather than starting them with a full caseload.                                                                                                              |

102	Rep. Farr	Comments if caseworker had a clear picture from the beginning of what they were getting into, they could opt out immediately.
113	Bennett	Replies much of the job can't really be explained, but must be experienced. Notes caseworkers used to dictate reports, but must now prepare them, themselves. Clarifies how long it takes to create each project.
143	Yvonne Rechhia	Third-party sex abuse caseworker, CARE. Notes her responsibilities and the value of her work to the case system. Compares her present work environment to being a DHS caseworker. States her present clients feel helped, but those in the child welfare system don't. Supports the governor's idea to provide caseworkers legal representation.
178	Rep. Greenlick	Relates his visit to CARE, which is half-funded by private donations, commenting it is an amazing organization.
188	Rechhia	Relates process of a family being assessed at their facility and then the case moving to DHS. States we count on clients being helped after they leave the CARE office, but DHS is unable to do that comprehensively.
210	Nancy Webb	Foster parent advocate. Reports foster parents are as overloaded as caseworkers. States the inability to make a difference in children's lives if conditions continue as they are.
249	Lynn Davenport	Addresses specific questions asked by the committee earlier in the meeting. Discusses caseworkers' time consumed finding items such as car seats. Talks about caseworker burnout. States college training does not prepare someone for DHS casework as it does not include experience with criminality and other critical issues. Recommends caseworkers be brought in on a graduated case exposure system. Relates case aides need an opportunity to advance as they gain experience and street smarts. Reports new employees are usually placed where there is the highest risk and need for judgment, rather than reserving such for a master level with incentives to secure the savviest people. Recommends ongoing measurement of child safety and expresses concern with the inability of DHS to do criminal history checks.
295	Rep. Greenlick	NOTE: Rep. Greenlick and Davenport debate why DHS should respond to her inquiries from tape 3,B 295 to tape 4,B.

370	Davenport	States a competently-managed agency should know the answers to the questions she has raised, whether or not they share the answers with her.
375	Rep. Farr	Inquires what Davenport is involved in, presently.
383	Davenport	Reports she is writing a book on child protection. Reiterates her questions to DHS on when staff will have access to criminal records. Questions how guided assessments are progressing, how the process is being measured, and raises the issue of follow-through on frontline workers. Recommends naming the agency – giving it an identity.

**TAPE 4, B**

054	Julie McFarlane	Supervising Attorney, Juvenile Rights Project. Submits reports ( <b>exhibit b</b> ) and testifies on child welfare issues. Discusses flex funding and relative foster care funding. References the study on promoting community protection of adolescents, discussing improving mandatory reporting of child abuse. States such training should be mandatory college curriculum for professions encountering possible abuse. Suggests the reporting laws be revised and clarified.
171	Rep. Greenlick	Inquires if a statue has formally been requested in that regard.
175	McFarlane	Replies, not yet, but the commission will be considering new projects tomorrow.
188	Maryann Wilkes	Relates personal experience in child welfare. Echoes the stresses of the work and notes people are not predictable and laws are interpreted differently. Confirms the necessity of time to develop needed skills and wisdom. States the knowledge base has been lost. Reports the most complex impacting factor is methamphetamine. Discusses the Governor's funding proposal impacting foster parents, noting there will be no place to put children if funding is cut for foster care.
304	Chair Dalto	Relates need for citizens to inform their representatives of their concerns. Mentions Speaker Minnis' participation at the DHS office. Reiterates commitment of the committee to address these issues.
332	Wilkes	Comments she feels listened to in her organization and not threatened for challenging problems.
365	Chair Dalto	

Notes additional meetings scheduled in Salem, stating the record will be kept open for additional comments.

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| 380 | Susan Detlefsen | Parent of former foster child. Relates experience of her own child taken fraudulently. Relates some parents are teaching their children to run from DHS workers. Mentions harassment experienced. |
| 427 | Rep. Greenlick  | Questions the motivation caseworkers would have to fraudulently concoct a story.                                                                                                                  |
| 440 | Detlefsen       | Relates her belief caseworkers need to maintain their federal funding stream.                                                                                                                     |
| 465 | Rep. Greenlick  | Replies caseworkers report they want fewer cases.                                                                                                                                                 |
| 471 | Detlefsen       | Reiterates belief in dependency money.                                                                                                                                                            |

**TAPE 5, A**

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| 012 | Rep. Farr      | Reports her experience with a caseworker whose goal was to reunite children with their families.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 039 | Detlefsen      | Mentions other parents who want their children returned. States if DHS can't help someone, they need to leave them alone. Notes children she has interviewed on the streets who have run away from foster homes. Mentions children who are flown across the country by the department.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 053 | Lorie Morphis  | Represents parents of missing children. States she has post-traumatic stress disorder. States there isn't a methamphetamine or abuse problem in her home, but a discrimination issue. Notes her children were molested in foster care and DHS cannot return them without assuming liability. Relates trauma experienced by children removed from non-offending homes. Mentions stories fabricated by DHS for a court case. Reports parents are afraid and fear retaliation. |
| 133 | Rep. Greenlick | Asks if Morphis has information she can share with the committee on her case.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 136 | Morphis        | Mentions video taped interviews of her daughter.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

145	Rep. Farr	Inquires about Morphis' attorney's handling of the information.
148	Morphis	Relates details of interactions with her case worker, attorney, psychologist and the Citizen Review Board.
183	Rep. Greenlick	Questions what the barrier might be to being reunited with her children.
186	Morphis	Believes once abuse was reported, DHS workers became anxious to cover it up.
205	Rep. Greenlick	Asks if Morphis believes the problem would be exposed if the children were returned home.
209	Morphis	Believes DHS fears she will pursue action against those liable for her children's welfare. Discusses federal mandates that promote adoptions. Relates meeting other parents whose children have also been taken for unknown reasons. States parental knowledge of rights to resist is nonexistent.
266	Chair Dalto	Questions if parents really do not know why their children are being removed.
279	Morphis	States she did not know, and the caseworker did not respond to her inquiries. Recommends public accountability include deadlines.

**The following prepared testimony is submitted for the records without public testimony:**

	Marlene Shipley	Written testimony in support of HB 2010 ( <b>Exhibit c</b> ).
317	Chair Dalto	Closes the meeting to public comment. Adjourns the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

## **EXHIBIT SUMMARY**

- A. HB 2010, information packet, Julie McFarlane, 29 pp**
- B. Child Welfare, reports on adolescent protection, Julie McFarlane, ? pp**



**The following prepared testimony is submitted for the records without public testimony:**

**C. HB 2010, written testimony, Marlene Shipley, 2 pp**