



From the Office of
THE SENATE PRESIDENT

July 28, 2026

Delivered via email

Amy Zubko, Director
Valerie Sasaki, Chair
Oregon Law Commission Program Committee

Dear Director Zubko, Chair Sasaki, and members of the Program Committee,

I am writing today to share my thoughts on the proposal before you to review the child welfare statutes contained in ORS Chapters 418 and 419B. I apologize because I was not able to get this to you in advance of your meeting last week. While I had discussions about the proposal, I had not seen the contents of a letter prior to it coming to you and was out of the country last week.

In terms of the considerations I reviewed in deciding whether I would support this request - ultimately, I have concluded that the Oregon Law Commission is not the appropriate venue to review this set of policy concerns at this time.

My primary concern relates to the timing and the scope of the proposal. Oregon is not unique in recognizing the need to modernize child welfare laws. This is a challenge many states are facing and has been a topic of broad conversation in the Oregon Legislature over the last few years in particular.

The legislature is currently engaged in multiple layers of policy review, including two large, open work groups organized by the Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee Senator Sara Gelser-Blouin. It is my understanding that progress is being made in those discussions, though it is understandably uncertain how far the workgroups will reach in terms of consensus in advance of the 2027 legislative session.

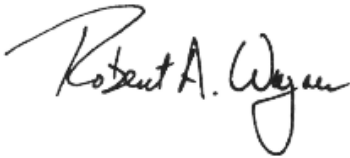
In my consideration, I also reviewed the purpose of the Law Commission, established in 1997, and the types of projects undertaken over the years. It is my understanding that the Law Commission was established to review and address technical and structural issues with the construction of Oregon law. This proposal appears to ask the law commission to wade into complicated policy choices that are more rightly vested in the legislature.

Unlike other proposals the Law Commission considers, there is no Uniform Law Commission recommendation or consensus approach across the country. This proposal appears to ask the Commission to address more than just modifying or eliminating antiquated and inequitable rules of law. I am concerned about the precedence this proposal might establish for other future policy debates.

I understand the Program Committee has asked for a work plan and stakeholder list before taking this issue under further consideration. At minimum, I would ask the law commission to delay consideration until the legislature can further engage in substantive policy conversations and review whether additional progress can be made in the 2027 legislative session.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert A. Wagner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Robert A. Wagner
Oregon Senate President