

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2752

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Children's Services

**Title:** An act relating to the safety of runaway youth.

**Brief Description:** Modifying provisions relating to providing shelter to a minor.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dickerson, Orwall, Walsh, Goodman, Kagi, Roberts, Pedersen, Green, Santos and Nelson.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Children's Services: 1/26/10, 1/29/10 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Allows up to 72 hours for licensed youth shelters or other facilities serving homeless or runaway youth to notify the parent of a youth admitted to the shelter or facility.
- Establishes a preference for the notice to parents to be made within 24 hours of the youth being admitted to a shelter.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Goodman and Seaquist.

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

Any person providing shelter to a minor who knows the youth is absent from home without parental permission is required to notify the youth's parent, law enforcement, or the Department of Social and Health Services within eight hours of becoming aware that the youth is away from home without permission.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Licensed youth shelters and other facilities serving youth who are homeless or have runaway from home and their families must notify the youth's parent within 72 hours of the youth being admitted to the shelter or facility. The notice should be provided preferably within 24 hours, but in all cases must be made with 72 hours.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill specifies that the preferred timeline for notifying the parent of a minor admitted to a youth shelter is 24 hours, and that the maximum time allowed for contacting the parent is 72 hours.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Allowing staff in youth shelters more time to notify a parent is consistent with federal requirements. This bill is intended to increase safety for children. The Becca Bill has done a lot of good, but the eight-hour notification provision needs a little adjustment. We need to support our outreach workers and our counselors who are trying to reengage youth and bring them back to their families and community.

It often takes shelter staff more than eight hours to stabilize a youth and gain their trust to begin addressing the family conflict. Youth who have run away from home often don't go to a shelter because they are fearful their parents will be notified right away, and when these youth stay on the streets they become vulnerable to predators who are willing to provide shelter and food, but who ignore the reporting law. By allowing shelter staff more time to meet the youth's immediate needs for food, shelter, and rest, staff can develop a rapport and begin working with the youth to gain their cooperation in contacting parents and to begin the process of facilitating communication between the youth and the parent. Shelter staff routinely encourage youth to call parents and at least notify them they are safe.

Research in child prostitution reflects that runaway youth who remain on the street rather than going to a shelter are more likely to be victimized and eventually entrenched into the world of child prostitution. This is really about trying to address the competition between shelter staff, who want to assist the youth and the family, and predators on the street who are using the eight-hour notification requirement to convince youth to stay away from the shelter so that the predator can start the grooming process.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Jaclyn Mellon, Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets; Katie Meyer, Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington; Jim Theofelis, Mockingbird Society; Diane Jordan and Liza Burell, YouthCare; and Charles Shelan, Community Youth Services.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.