

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1756

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, March 30, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to dependent children.

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to dependent children.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Veloria, Cooke, Cody, Lambert, Thibaudeau, Patterson and Costa).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 3/29/95, 3/30/95 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kohl, Long, Palmer, Prentice, Schow, Smith and Strannigan.

**Staff:** Dennis Martin (786-7403)

**Background:** If a court determines that a child is dependent and is ordered removed from his or her home, a permanency plan is submitted to the court. A permanency planning hearing shall be held, if an adoption decree or guardianship order has not been entered, and the child has remained in out-of-home care for at least nine months (children 10 and under) or 15 months (children over 10).

If a child is found to be dependent, the court may place the child with a relative or in foster care. Court hearings related to the child's dependency are closed to the general public and a judge may allow a relative or foster parent caring for the child to attend for the sole purpose of providing information about the child to the court.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** A relative or a foster parent caring for a child may attend any hearing or proceeding pertaining to the child, unless the court states the reasons on the record for disallowing attendance. Relatives may attend whether or not they provide care of the child. Relatives and foster parents may attend for the sole purpose of providing oral and written information about the child and the child's welfare to the court.

Placement of the child with a relative must be given preference by the court. If the child is not returned home, the court must establish in writing whether preference has been given to placement with the child's relative.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The amended bill expands the types of hearings and proceedings a relative or foster parent may attend, allows relatives to attend such proceedings whether or not the relative provides care to the child, requires the court

to give preference to parents in the placement of children, and removes references to including permanent custody orders under permanency plans.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on March 20, 1995.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Relatives want greater access and input into the dependency process. Grandparents and other relatives should be given preference to provide care to children.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** John Weers, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (pro); Judy Chinn, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (pro); Don Knapp, Foster Parents Association of Washington State (pro); Vivian L. Weers, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (pro); Nancy J. Kjensrud, grandparent (pro); Sophia Kovidou-Giles, DCFS Independent Living Program (pro).