

# ***HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS***

## ***HB 2588***

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**Title:** An act relating to domestic violence fatality reviews.

**Brief Description:** Creating domestic violence fatality review panels.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Tokuda, D. Sommers, Kagi, Boldt, Kenney, Dickerson, Ogden, Veloria, Haigh, Santos, Romero, O'Brien, Edwards, Constantine, Rockefeller, Miloscia and McIntire.

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### **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

**Meeting Date:** February 3, 2000.

**Bill Analysis Prepared by:** Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

**Background:** Local Departments of Health are responsible for conducting child mortality reviews for persons under 18 years of age. The purpose of the review is to identify preventable causes of child mortality, including violence, so that these causes may be addressed.

County coroners are responsible for determining whether an inquest is needed to examine the death of a person suspected, to be a result of unlawful means or suspicious circumstances, or of unnatural or violent causes. The purpose of the inquest is to determine the cause of death and to support enforcement of criminal laws related to death.

In 1997, Washington received grant funding from the federal Violence Against Women Act to create a model for a statewide domestic violence fatality review mechanism. Three pilot review panels covering five counties (Pierce, Spokane, Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan) began reviewing deaths in 1998. A fourth panel was formed in Yakima/Kittitas Counties in 1999, and a fifth is being organized in King County. At least four other communities have requested help in forming review panels.

**Summary of Bill:** House Bill 2588 provides that, subject to available funds, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) shall contract with an entity, with expertise in domestic violence, to coordinate regional domestic violence fatality review panels. The contractor shall:

1. Convene regional review panels;
1. Gather information for use of regional review panels;
1. Provide training and technical assistance to regional review panels;

1. Compile information and issue annual reports with recommendations; and
1. Establish a protocol that may be used as a guideline for identifying domestic violence related fatalities, forming review panels, convening reviews, and selecting which cases to review. The coordinating entity may also establish protocols for data collection and preservation of confidentiality.

"Domestic violence fatality" is defined. The composition of the domestic violence fatality review panels is established. Confidentiality of information reviewed by the panels is assured. The panel is given access to information about the batterer from various sources. The panel is given authority to review any information determined to be relevant to the review.

Data related to reviewed fatalities is to be collected and analyzed for the purpose of identifying points at which improvements can be made to the system of response to domestic violence, and to identify patterns in domestic violence fatalities.

***Appropriation:*** None.

***Fiscal Note:*** Requested on January 24, 2000.

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