

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 6356

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Ecology

Title: An act relating to the children's environmental health and protection advisory council.

Brief Description: Creating the children's environmental health and protection advisory council.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Franklin, Winsley, Fairley, Shin, Regala, Kline, Costa, Poulsen, Rasmussen, Keiser, Deccio, Kohl-Welles, Kastama, Prentice, Eide, McAuliffe, Parlette, Fraser, Long and Jacobsen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/28/02 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Creates the 15-member Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (council) to review existing laws, regulations, and standards to ensure adequate protection of children's health from environmental hazards.
- Requires the state Board of Health to provide staff support to the council and allows the state Board of Health to accept public and private funds for council activities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Hunt, Vice Chair; Cooper, Dunshee, Grant, Kirby, Quall and Roach.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Delvin, Holmquist and Sump.

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

Governance of the state's public health system includes state and local components. The Department of Health (department) is the state agency responsible for preserving public health, monitoring health care costs, maintaining minimum standards for quality health care delivery, and planning activities related to public health. The state Board of Health is the state regulatory authority in a variety of public health areas, including drinking water, immunizations, school safety, and food handling. Washington also has 34 local health departments or districts providing public health services at the local level.

According to recent studies, more than 70,000 chemicals are in international commerce, and thousands of additional compounds are released into the environment as pollutants, combustion by-products, or wastes. In addition, almost 500 synthetic chemicals are detectable in human tissues. Recent studies have detected pesticide residues in the urine of Washington children and a variety of contaminants, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins, nicotine, metals, and some pesticides, in human breast milk. In addition, many children have nervous system damage from lead exposure.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (council) is created. The council includes 15 members appointed as follows:

- Four legislative members, one from each caucus of the House of Representatives and the Senate, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate respectively;
- One tribal representative appointed by the Governor;
- One member of the state Board of Health;
- One licensed pediatric health care provider with expertise in the field of children's environmental health, appointed by the Governor;
- One parent or guardian whose child has been clinically diagnosed with exposure to an environmental health hazard, appointed by the Governor;
- One expert in the field of environmental toxicology, appointed by the Governor;
- The Secretaries of the following agencies or their designees: the Department of Health, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social and Health Services, and the Department of Labor and Industries; and the Superintendent of Public Instruction or designee.
- Members of the Council serve without compensation.

Beginning in 2003, the Council is required to meet at least four times per year to review and comment on existing laws, rules, regulations, and standards to ensure that they adequately protect children's health from environmental hazards. "Environmental hazard" is defined as toxic chemical, biological, or physical environmental agents resulting from human activities or natural processes that may impact the health of

exposed children. "Environmental hazard" includes such pollutants as lead, pesticides, air pollutants, contaminated drinking water, polluted waters, toxic waste, polychlorinated biphenyls, secondhand tobacco smoke, and industrial and home chemicals.

Beginning in 2003, the council is also required to work collaboratively with state agencies and others without duplicating current work in this area. By December 1 of 2003 and 2004, the council must report to the Governor and the Legislature with recommendations for regulatory changes to reduce children's exposure to environmental hazards and recommendations for collaborative approaches to public education.

The state Board of Health is to provide staff support and administrative assistance to the council. The state Board of Health may solicit, accept, and spend gifts, grants, bequests, devises, and other funds from public and private sources for the council's activities. Funding for the Board of Health and agencies directed to participate in and support the council's activities must be provided from funds acquired by the Board of Health in this manner and from any existing resources agencies may be able to direct toward these activities.

Legislative findings are included regarding the many preventable exposures to environmental hazards children face in their schools, homes, and communities and the disproportionate risk of such exposures for children with higher rates of poverty. Legislative findings also specify the need for ongoing communication, collaboration, and cooperation of affected communities to produce solutions to complex environmental health problems.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The amendment specifies the Council's requirements for meetings and collaboration begin in 2003. The amendment also specifies state agencies' participation in and support of Council activities are to be funded through funds acquired by donation by the state Board of Health and any existing resources that state agencies may be able to direct toward these activities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Expiration Date: The council provisions expire June 30, 2005.

Testimony For: This bill is about children, who are affected by exposure to many environmental health hazards. Major factors include lead, poor indoor and outdoor air

quality, endocrine disruptors, and poor water quality. Recent studies show children are more likely than adults to suffer long-term problems from exposure to environmental health hazards. Teachers and students are exposed to environmental health hazards in schools; the number of teachers and children developing asthma in recent years is very disturbing.

This bill will allow for coordination of efforts among state agencies and collaboration of the agencies involved in these issues. This bill will not duplicate efforts.

The Board of Health supports this bill, but is concerned about funding and requests that the bill be amended to specify council activities will begin in 2003. Private funding is being sought for this program.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Senator Rosa Franklin, prime sponsor; and Sheila Sandwick, Washington State Board of Health.