

Higher Education Committee

HB 1707

Brief Description: *Requiring fingerprint-based background checks on some employees of institutions of higher education.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Hurst, Roach, Ballasiotes, Lovick, Mielke, Quall, Carrell, O'Brien, Veloria, Poulsen, Dunshee and Haigh.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Requires fingerprint based criminal history checks for conviction records on new employees of institutions of higher education who will have unsupervised contact with minors.*

Hearing Date: *2/12/01*

Staff: *Tracey Taylor (786-7196).*

Background:

Criminal history checks are conducted on many public employees, including teachers and county treasurers. Such checks are also conducted on many persons licensed by the state, including foster parents. These criminal history checks are done through the Washington State Patrol (WSP) and may also include a check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Most checks are finger-print based because these checks are the most accurate. If a criminal history check shows a conviction for certain felonies, an individual may be denied a job or a license. Such crimes include child abuse and other offenses involving children as well as the financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

An applicant for a teaching certificate or employment by an educational service district, school district or their contractors must undergo a criminal history check. If the check reveals a guilty plea or conviction for a sexual felony involving a minor, he or she must be denied employment or certification.

Summary of Bill:

A fingerprint based criminal history search for conviction records must be performed on new employees of institutions of higher education who will have unsupervised access to minors. This check will be performed by the WSP. If an employee has not lived in Washington state for at least 3 years, a FBI check must also be completed.

If necessary, a prospective employee awaiting the outcome of a criminal history check may be employed on a conditional basis pending the results of the check. If the prospective employee has had a criminal history check completed by the WSP or the FBI, the institution of higher education may rely on it.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board shall establish a list of criminal offenses that will disqualify a prospective employee for a position involving the unsupervised access to a minor. Only felonies convictions occurring within the previous 10 years can be considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2001.

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