

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6702

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to protecting sibling relationships.

Brief Description: Protecting sibling relationships.

Sponsors: Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Long, Costa, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Carlson, Hewitt, Kastama, Johnson, Shin, Swecker, Hale, Rossi, Oke, Zarelli, McCaslin, Horn, Thibaudeau, West, Deccio, Rasmussen, Parlette, Sheahan, Benton, McDonald, Roach, T. Sheldon, Hochstatter, Honeyford, Morton, Finkbeiner and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/1/02, 2/6/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6702 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Although the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to consider children's and families' multiple needs when assessing dependency cases, there is no requirement that DSHS or the courts take into consideration the need for siblings to maintain contact when a child is placed out of the home.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DSHS must ensure that siblings who are separated prior to and as the result of a dependency determination are provided the opportunity to maintain their relationship through visits. The courts are given authority to order appropriate visitation between siblings. DSHS must take into consideration the need to maintain regular sibling contact when conducting a social study for purposes of out of home care.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Language is added to assure that parental visitation is not decreased in order to provide for sibling visitation. The department must also address sibling relationship as part of the permanency plan, unless to do so would jeopardize the health, safety or welfare of the child.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Sibling relationships should be taken into consideration when a child may be removed from the home.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; LaVerne Lamoureux, Children's Administration/DSHS; Linda Lillevik, Washington Defenders Association.