

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5528

As Amended by House, April 9, 2009

Title: An act relating to making technical nonsubstantive corrections to the initial point of contact program established in chapter 496, Laws of 2007.

Brief Description: Making technical nonsubstantive corrections to the initial point of contact program established in chapter 496, Laws of 2007.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senator Hargrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/12/09, 2/23/09 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/12/09, 47-0.

Passed House: 4/09/09, 76-22.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5528 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell and Kauffman.

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: In 2007 the Legislature created an initial point of contact program to provide services to parties in a dissolution action. This program is designed to provide information about court services and programs, alternatives to filing a dissolution, alternatives to litigation, supportive family services in the community, and services that are available to address domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, and mental health. The legislation is effective on July 1, 2009, and will be mandatory if state funding is provided.

The legislation also requested the Washington Supreme Court to convene a task force in order to study issues related to dissolution and to make recommendations related to the initial point of contact program. The task force met between 2007 and 2008, and produced a final report in December 2008.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Clarifications are made to the initial point of contact program which specify that the program will function as an information and referral program to provide information to the parties in an action under 26.09 RCW about services that may be available to the parties.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We support these changes, which were recommended by the task force. The changes solve some issues with the original bill. The information provided by this program will be helpful to litigants, many of whom represent themselves. There are real safety issues. The committee should also consider other changes proposed by the task force, such as allowing information to be provided online, or by third parties, or within 30 days after filing. Courts should not charge a \$20 fee for this service.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Lonnie Johns-Brown, National Organization for Women; David Spring, citizen; Lisa Scott, Taking Action Against Bias in the System.

House Amendment(s): Requires that the Family Law Handbook, which contains information about marriage and dissolution, also pertain to domestic partnerships.