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SENATE BILL 5531

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State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Senators Darneille, Litzow, Hargrove, Murray, Nelson, Carrell, Pearson, Fain, Mullet, Harper, Tom, Rivers, Hewitt, Hill, and Keiser

Read first time 02/01/13. Referred to Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

1 AN ACT Relating to measuring performance of the child welfare  
2 system; adding new sections to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating a new  
3 section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that the  
6 goals of the child welfare system are to protect the safety,  
7 permanence, and well-being of the children it serves. The legislature  
8 further recognizes the importance of maintaining publicly accessible  
9 data that tracks the performance of the child welfare system, leading  
10 to transparency and accountability of and public confidence in the  
11 system. The legislature acknowledges that, although there have been  
12 many efforts to improve the child welfare system, including  
13 legislation, policy making, and litigation, and while all of these  
14 efforts have led to improvements to the system, there has not been a  
15 comprehensive legislative mandate regarding the comprehensive  
16 functionality of the child welfare system.

17 (2) The legislature believes it is important to address the need to  
18 codify key indicators of safety, permanence, and well-being such that  
19 the public and the legislature understand how the child welfare system

1 is performing at any given time. This information will also serve the  
2 legislature in determining priorities for investment of public dollars  
3 as well as need for substantive legislative changes to facilitate  
4 improvement.

5 (3) The legislature intends the primary purpose of this legislation  
6 to be the assessment of the success of the department of social and  
7 health services' practices in achieving its objectives. The reports  
8 will be used to provide feedback to the department. The agencies  
9 referenced in section 3 of this act will not disclose individually  
10 identifiable private information except as allowable under federal and  
11 state law.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW  
13 to read as follows:

14 The indicators of safety, permanency, and well-being described in  
15 this section must be used to measure the delivery of appropriate  
16 services for the children and families served by the child welfare  
17 system, to identify areas for future improvements to the child welfare  
18 system, and to maintain public accountability.

19 (1) The following are the safety indicators that must be used:

20 (a) The recurrence of safety concerns, such as recontact with the  
21 child welfare system, regarding children in home;

22 (b) The recurrence of safety concerns regarding children in out-of-  
23 home care; and

24 (c) Placement prevention.

25 (2) The following are the permanency indicators that must be used:

26 (a) Safe reunification of children placed in out-of-home care;

27 (b) Length of time to permanence for children placed in out-of-home  
28 care; and

29 (c) Placement stability for children placed in out-of-home care.

30 (3) The following are the well-being indicators that must be used:

31 (a) Maintenance of family relationships for children placed in out-  
32 of-home care;

33 (b) Levels of educational readiness and attainment for children  
34 served by the child welfare system;

35 (c) Behavioral and physical health of children served by the child  
36 welfare system; and

1 (d) Adult functioning of youth who have aged out of the child  
2 welfare system, including social integration and independence.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW  
4 to read as follows:

5 (1) A university-based child welfare research entity, in  
6 cooperation with the department and other stakeholders, shall develop  
7 measurements for each of the indicators in section 2 of this act using  
8 existing and available data. Measurements must be calculated from data  
9 used in the routine work of the state agencies' data and information  
10 technology departments. Any new record linkage or data-matching  
11 activities required in fulfillment of this section and section 2 of  
12 this act must be performed by the research entity pursuant to  
13 agreements developed under subsection (6) of this section. The state  
14 agencies include any agency or subagency providing data used in the  
15 integrated client database maintained by the research and data analysis  
16 division of the department. Data must be shared subject to applicable  
17 federal and state law.

18 (2) All measurements must use a methodology accepted by the  
19 scientific community. Wherever possible, all measurements must address  
20 any disproportionate racial and ethnic inequality.

21 (3) The research entity shall develop the measurements by October  
22 31, 2013.

23 (4) The measurements developed by the research entity may not  
24 require the state agencies to revise their data collection systems, nor  
25 to provide individually identifiable information under RCW 42.56.320.

26 (5) The state agencies shall provide the research entity with all  
27 measurement data at least quarterly, consistent with subsection (3) of  
28 this section, beginning January 1, 2014. The research entity shall  
29 make the data publicly available and shall issue a public report at  
30 least twice a year, beginning on September 1, 2014. The research  
31 entity shall report on the data to the legislature and the governor  
32 annually starting December 31, 2014.

33 (6) By December 31, 2013, the state agencies shall execute  
34 agreements with the research entity to enable sharing of data  
35 sufficient to comply with this section and section 2 of this act.

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