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SENATE BILL 5897

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State of Washington                      64th Legislature                      2015 Regular Session

By Senators Cleveland, Darneille, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, and Chase

Read first time 02/09/15. Referred to Committee on Human Services,  
Mental Health & Housing.

1            AN ACT Relating to providing funding for medical evaluations of  
2 suspected victims of child abuse; adding a new section to chapter  
3 7.68 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

5            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.**    (1) The legislature established the crime  
6 victims' compensation fund in 1973 to cover medical bills and other  
7 costs associated with being the victim of a crime. State law requires  
8 the crime victims' compensation fund to pay the costs of sexual  
9 assault examinations when they are performed to gather evidence for  
10 possible prosecution. Currently, child sexual abuse exams are  
11 eligible for reimbursement through the crime victims' compensation  
12 fund, but child physical abuse exams are not eligible for the same  
13 reimbursement.

14            (2) The legislature intends to address this disparity by  
15 requiring that the state pay for the medical examination of children  
16 who may be victims of felony-level physical abuse. This population  
17 represents a small percentage of all child abuse referrals. For  
18 instance, of all examinations performed by the child abuse assessment  
19 team affiliated with the Clark county children's justice center in  
20 Vancouver, Washington in 2014 for suspected child abuse, only eight  
21 and one-half percent of exams resulted in felony-level referrals.

1 These victims are a particularly vulnerable population, as they are  
2 often too young or too afraid to speak for themselves. The  
3 legislature finds that requiring the cost of these examinations to be  
4 borne by the state will incentivize timely evaluations, lead to early  
5 identification of abuse, and potentially prevent a child from further  
6 traumatization or injury.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 7.68 RCW  
8 to read as follows:

9 No costs incurred by an institution as defined by RCW 26.44.020  
10 for the examination of a suspected victim of assault of a child under  
11 chapter 9A.36 RCW may be billed or charged directly or indirectly to  
12 the suspected victim of the assault. The costs must be paid by the  
13 state pursuant to this chapter.

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