

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5282

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, January 30, 2025

Title: An act relating to reestablishing the advisory board for the missing and exploited children task force.

Brief Description: Reestablishing the advisory board for the missing and exploited children task force.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Frame, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Riccelli, Saldaña, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/27/25, 1/30/25 [DPS-WM, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Reestablishes the advisory board to the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5282 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Dhingra, Chair; Trudeau, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Member; Lovick, Salomon and Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Fortunato and Torres.

Staff: Ryan Giannini (786-7285)

Background: Missing and Exploited Children Task Force. In 1999, the Legislature enacted

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the Teekah Lewis Act which created the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force (MECTF). The MECTF is a multi-agency task force, under the direction of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), focused on identifying, arresting, and convicting those individuals who exploit children. The MECTF is available to assist agencies that do not have the resources or training necessary to investigate crimes against children. The MECTF is authorized to assist law enforcement agencies upon request in cases involving missing or exploited children by:

- directing assistance and case management;
- providing technical assistance;
- providing personnel training;
- making referrals for assistance from local, state, national, and international agencies; and
- coordinating and sharing information among local, state, interstate, and federal law enforcement and social services agencies.

Advisory Board to the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force. In 1999, an advisory board for the MECTF (Board) was also established. The six-member Board advised the chief of the WSP on the objectives, conduct, management, and coordination of the various activities of the MECTF.

Five members of the Board were appointed by the WSP chief, which included a county prosecuting attorney, a municipal police chief, a county sheriff, a representative of the WSP, and one person representing parents of missing or exploited children. The sixth member was appointed by the attorney general. Board members served two-year terms. Over the years, Board participation was extended to include additional stakeholders such as representatives from federal law enforcement agencies and state social service agencies.

In 2016, the Legislature terminated the Board.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): The Board is reestablished to advise the chief of the WSP on the objectives, conduct, management, and coordination of the various activities of the MECTF.

The WSP chief shall appoint seven members of the Board, including:

- a county prosecuting attorney;
- a municipal police chief or a county sheriff;
- a representative of the WSP;
- a defense attorney;
- a member of a federally recognized tribe;
- a certified sex offender treatment provider; and
- a person with lived experience of child abduction or child exploitation.

One member shall represent and be appointed by the attorney general.

The Board must meet at least annually and submit an annual report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature beginning December 1, 2026. The report must include:

- details regarding reactive sting operations and proactive sting operations conducted by the MECTF;
- assessments of the objective, conduct, achievements, and performance outcomes of the MECTF; and
- recommendations to better achieve the objectives of the MECTF.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Adds a member of a federally recognized tribe, a certified sex offender treatment provider, and a person with direct lived experience of child exploitation or child abduction to the advisory board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Participants of net nanny operations are abusing their roles. This bill will reinstate the MECTF advisory board to review the MECTF's objectives, conduct, and funding. This is not an anti-law enforcement issue, but instead, aims to address child abductions and exploitation through better oversight and supervision. A board would ensure honesty and integrity and allow the task force to focus on real threats to the community, instead of targeting vulnerable populations, such as those who are neurodivergent or lonely. The board would improve child exploitation case outcomes by highlighting the backlog of child exploitation cases and staffing shortages in its annual reports. Because there are budget constraints, we should make sure we are focusing on getting the truly dangerous perpetrators.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Colin Wood, CAGE; Franklin Wilson, Triple F's Investigation; Mick Woynarowski; Matthew Perry, Jewish Prisoner Services International; Jacob Schmitt, Just Us Solutions, LLC; Bruce Glant; Jane Smith.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.