

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5850

As of March 6, 1995

Title: An act relating to evaluation and accountability of programs within the department of social and health services.

Brief Description: Providing for evaluation of department of social and health services programs.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Hargrove, Long, Owen, Heavey, Quigley, Haugen, Moyer, Winsley, Schow and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/27/95.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Stan Pynch (786-7512)

Background: Authority and responsibility for performance assessment, performance audits, and performance improvement is vested in a number of agencies within state government.

The Legislature created the Washington Performance Partnership (WPP) in 1994, setting forth the expectation that Washington State government be the most effective and best performing state government in the United States. A primary objective of the WPP is to improve performance of programs and services by clarifying objectives, measuring performance, analyzing and improving processes, redesigning systems, and removing barriers to performance. This objective is to be achieved by initiating projects to develop and refine strategies that can then be replicated in other agencies and programs throughout state government.

In addition, the Legislative Budget Committee is authorized to conduct performance audits, program evaluations, and management surveys, all of which are intended to provide independent examination of agency and program performance, along with recommendations for improvement.

Currently, the State Auditor is authorized to conduct performance verifications to verify the accuracy of measurements and reports used by agencies in measuring their performance. Such performance verifications must be specifically authorized by the Legislature in the omnibus biennial appropriations act.

Summary of Bill: Subject to appropriation, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to contract with a public or private entity to study models for evaluating the effectiveness of programs within each division of the agency. The DSHS Secretary selects programs that facilitate development of a set of representative evaluation models for replication in other programs.

The study will review models that include program improvement as an important part of program evaluation, and must consider cost, time requirements, impact on participants, legal and ethical issues, and information requirements and uses. The models must address data collection and analysis strategies, and a range of acceptable outcomes for measurement.

The contractor is required to consult with the Legislative Budget Committee, the DSHS, entities that provide funding, vendors, consumers, and other stakeholders.

The study and recommendations for evaluation systems must be submitted to the DSHS and appropriate legislative committees by October 1, 1996; a written response from DSHS is to be submitted by December 1, 1996.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 1995.

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

Testimony For: Auditors might not be the best equipped to evaluate programs. Program evaluation requires expertise in the issues and disciplines being examined. Program evaluation is essential and complements performance auditors and the Washington Performance Partnership. Effective approaches to program evaluation were presented.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Kohl, prime sponsor.