

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 5213

Title: An act relating to record checks of private school educational employees.

Brief Description: Requiring record checks for employees of approved private schools who have regularly scheduled unsupervised access to children.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles and Costa).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: March 18, 1999.

Analysis Prepared by: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background: All children from 8 to 17 years old are required to attend public school unless they are enrolled in a private school, are receiving home-based instruction, are attending an education center, are excused by the school district superintendent under certain circumstances, or are at least 16 years old and emancipated.

Private schools must be approved by the State Board of Education and comply with certain statutory requirements. They must annually file a certification with the Superintendent of Public Instruction that the private school meets these minimum statutory requirements, and must develop a process to correct any deficiencies. These requirements include: (1) the school year consists of at least 180 school days; (2) all classroom teachers must be certificated by this state except for teachers of religion courses and others with unusual competence who are supervised by a certificated teacher; and (3) the school facilities must be adequate to meet the program offered by the school and meet reasonable health and safety requirements. Private schools must report information on their students required by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to the appropriate educational service district, and must comply with rules relating to private schools promulgated by the State Board of Education.

Persons who are state certificated, such as teachers, undergo a records check as part of the certification process.

Summary of Bill: All approved private schools must require employees who regularly have unsupervised access to children hired on or after July 1, 1999 to undergo a record check, including a fingerprint check, through the Washington State Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The schools or the employees pay for these

record checks. Applicants may be employed on a conditional basis pending completion of the record check.

Employees who had a records check as part of the state certification process are not required to have another check done.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 10, 1999.

Effective Date: The act contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.