

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6166

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor & Workforce Development, January 31, 2000

**Title:** An act relating to creating a department of work force services.

**Brief Description:** Requiring a plan for a new department of work force services.

**Sponsors:** Senator Fairley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor & Workforce Development: 1/18/2000, 1/31/2000 [DP, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline and Wojahn.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

**Staff:** Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

**Background:** The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is a large state agency with a multitude of responsibilities. The department's clients include children, families in poverty, the developmentally disabled, and those who live in various types of care settings. The department manages health and welfare programs for some of the most vulnerable populations in Washington State.

Created in 1968, DSHS has grown and been redesigned many times over the past three decades. Present concerns with the department's structure and performance generated discussions during the second half of 1999 among legislators, academics, state workers, DSHS clients, advocates and concerned citizens regarding how to reorganize DSHS to be more responsive to the needs of Washington's poorer working families. In September of 1999, the Senate Committee on Labor & Workforce Development held a public hearing on these issues.

Concerns exist regarding departmental efficiencies and structure, client satisfaction, accessibility of information and services, and the ability of DSHS to protect those in its care and direct its resources to help those in poverty become self-sufficient.

**Summary of Bill:** The Governor submits a plan to the Legislature to reorganize DSHS by creating a Department of Workforce Services. Goals of the reorganization plan include improved service delivery and efficiencies, better needs assessment, more timely response,

a reexamination of principles, and creation of a model for job and welfare delivery that emphasizes performance measures, public access and accountability.

The plan must be presented by January 8, 2001, prior to convening the 2001 legislative session.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** The current system of service delivery to poor families is fragmented. Reform is needed to build a more integrated, comprehensive system and to help bring workers on welfare into the mainstream of workforce training and development.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Tony Lee, WA Welfare Reform Coalition.