

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6656

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 2, 2000

Title: An act relating to the educational needs of children and youth in foster care.

Brief Description: Commissioning a study of educational experiences and achievement levels of children in the state's foster care system.

Sponsors: Senators Eide, Kohl-Welles, Finkbeiner, Brown, Rasmussen, Goings, Patterson, Haugen, Gardner, Shin, Heavey, Jacobsen and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/31/2000, 2/2/2000 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6656 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Goings, Hochstatter, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Swecker and Zarelli.

Staff: Vanessa Power (786-7448)

Background: National research shows that up to 70 percent of foster children drop out before completing high school. There is limited information on the educational experiences of foster children in Washington State.

Schools maintain information on students including: basic information about the child, special education status, academic records, attendance records, disciplinary records, and health records. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) does not collect information based on a child's foster care status.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) collects information on foster children as part of the "Passport" program. This information includes basic information about the child, basic education information (name of school child attends, dates of attendance, and grade level), health records, and psychological information.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must conduct a study of the educational experiences and achievement levels of foster children. The institute must consult with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to assist with design and implementation of the study. The institute may consult an advisory committee to assist with design and implementation of the study.

The institute must provide a preliminary update by December 1, 2000, and must provide a final report to the Governor by July 1, 2001.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The bill is amended to require that the Washington State Institute for Public Policy conduct the study and provide reports. OSPI and DSHS must be consulted to assist with design and implementation of the study.

Appropriation: \$100,000.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Data on the educational experiences of foster children is needed to identify the scope of the problem, develop a plan to address needs, and hold OSPI and DSHS accountable for meeting the needs of foster children. There was testimony that suggested adding the impact of the "Becca Bill" on foster children to the study.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Janis Avery, Treehouse; Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals; John Vail, foster parent; Darlene Flowers, Foster Parents Association of Washington State; Melinda Dyer, Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Barbara Casey, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Stephenie Burbach, Washington State University.