

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6709

As Passed Senate, February 13, 2002

Title: An act relating to coordinated service and education planning for children in out-of-home care.

Brief Description: Addressing service and education planning for children in out-of-home care.

Sponsors: Senators Eide, Costa, Rasmussen, Thibaudeau, Prentice, Fraser, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Haugen and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/30/02, 2/6/02 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/13/02, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: A large proportion of children placed in foster care are taken out of the school they have regularly attended to accommodate the change in residence to the foster care placement. This disruption to a child's education may have a significant impact upon academic success.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must submit a proposal by October 1, 2002, to the Governor and the Legislature. The proposal must consider how best to address the educational needs of children in short-term out of home placement. The proposal must consider whether a child might best be served by remaining in the school he or she was enrolled in prior to the placement out of home, how costs related to transportation may be addressed, arrangements for children being home schooled or in private school, coordination of scheduling, and any statutory changes needed to carry out the proposal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2002.

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

Testimony For: Foster children are less likely to complete high school than other children. Providing some continuity in schooling is difficult when a child is moved, sometimes several

times to different schools. Record keeping is an issue. Children would benefit if such disruption could be avoided or kept to a minimum.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Stephenie Burbach, Families for Kids; Laverne Lamoureux, Children's Administration/DSHS; Phoebe Anderson, Treehouse; Eric Lawrence Cook, Treehouse; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

House Amendment(s): The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must, within existing resources, convene a workgroup and prepare a plan on educational stability for children in short-term foster care. The membership of the workgroup is: Children's Administration of DSHS, special education, transportation and apportionment divisions of OSPI, Washington State Institute for Public Policy, school districts, foster care advocates and others. The duties of the workgroup are to:

- determine the current status of school placement for children placed in short-term foster care;
- identify options and possible funding sources from existing resources which could be made available to assure that children placed in short-term foster care are able to remain in the school where they were enrolled prior to placement;
- submit recommendations to the Legislature by November 1, 2002, to assure the best interest of the child receives primary consideration in school placement decisions.

The Nooksack Valley and Mount Vernon school districts must implement a pilot project within existing resources to assist children in foster care fewer than 75 days to continue attending the school in which they were enrolled prior to entering foster care. The school districts must provide data to the working group studying this issue. The date for the pilot project to be implemented is April 30, 2002. DSHS must negotiate a plan with the schools for transporting the child but is not responsible for the cost of transportation.