
**Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Committee**

HB 1412

Brief Description: Creating the children's environmental health and protection advisory council.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Skinner, Linville, Benson, Nixon, Conway, Jarrett, Kagi, Chase, Cody, Darneille and Kenney.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the 15-member Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (Council) to review existing laws, regulations, and standards to ensure adequate protection of children's health from environmental hazards.
- Requires the state Board of Health to provide staff support to the council and allows the state Board of Health to accept public and private funds for council activities.

Hearing Date: 2/7/03

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

The Department of Health is the state agency responsible for preserving public health, monitoring health care costs, maintaining minimum standards for quality health care delivery, and planning activities related to public health. The state Board of Health is the state regulatory authority in a variety of public health areas, including drinking water, immunizations, school safety, and food handling. Washington also has 34 local health departments or districts providing public health services at the local level.

Studies have shown that children are more susceptible to exposure to environmental pollutants than adults. Children are particularly vulnerable to such hazards as lead, pesticides, air pollutants, contaminated water, toxic waste, secondhand tobacco smoke, and industrial and home chemicals. Children are more susceptible because they absorb toxins at a much higher rate relative to body weight than do adults. They also have not formed natural biological barriers that block toxins from entering the blood stream, and they tend to

play in areas where they are exposed to toxins.

Summary of Bill:

The Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (Council) is created. The Council includes 15 members appointed as follows:

- Four legislative members, one from each caucus of the House of Representatives and the Senate, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate respectively;
- One tribal representative appointed by the Governor;
- One member of the state Board of Health;
- One licensed pediatric health care provider with expertise in the field of children's environmental health, appointed by the Governor;
- One parent or guardian whose child has been clinically diagnosed with exposure to an environmental health hazard, appointed by the Governor;
- One expert in the field of environmental toxicology, appointed by the Governor;
- The Secretaries of the following agencies or their designees: the Department of Health, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social and Health Services, and the Department of Labor and Industries; and the Superintendent of Public Instruction or designee.
- Members of the Council serve without compensation.

The Council is required to meet at least four times per year to review and comment on existing laws, rules, regulations, and standards to ensure that they adequately protect children's health from environmental hazards. "Environmental hazard" is defined as toxic chemical, biological, or physical environmental agents resulting from human activities or natural processes that may impact the health of exposed children. "Environmental hazard" includes such pollutants as lead, pesticides, air pollutants, contaminated drinking water, polluted waters, toxic waste, polychlorinated biphenyls, secondhand tobacco smoke, and industrial and home chemicals.

The Council is also required to work collaboratively with state agencies and others without duplicating current work in this area. By December 1, 2004 and December 1, 2005, the council must report to the Governor and the Legislature with recommendations for regulatory changes to reduce children's exposure to environmental hazards and recommendations for collaborative approaches to public education.

The state Board of Health is to provide staff support to the council. The state Board of Health may accept funds from public and private sources for the council's activities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.