

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1058

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Children & Family Services & Corrections, April 4, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to educational attainment of children in foster care.

**Brief Description:** Addressing educational attainment for foster children.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, McIntire, Nixon, Dickerson, Fromhold, O'Brien, Lantz, Linville, Kenney, Kessler, Clibborn, Talcott, Simpson and Wood).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Children & Family Services & Corrections: 4/4/03 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

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**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

**Staff:** Edith Rice (786-7444)

**Background:** In 2002, legislation was enacted requiring the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to convene a working group to prepare a plan for the Legislature addressing educational stability and continuity for school-age children entering short-term foster care, and assuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in the school placement of a child in short-term foster care.

DSHS reported to the Legislature on the recommendations developed by the working group in November 2002. The working group's recommendations included the following:

- The Children's Administration (CA) of DSHS and the OSPI should develop a formal policy statement that maintains foster children in their home school whenever practical;
- Foster parent recruitment priorities should shift to develop more foster homes in school districts with high rates of foster care removal;
- An oversight committee consisting of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies should be established to develop best practice standards to maintain foster children in their home school whenever practical; and
- The CA and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) should work together to ensure educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing by the local CA social worker and the presiding Judge or Commissioner.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** It is the policy of the State of Washington that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children placed into foster care must remain enrolled in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care.

The administrative regions of DSHS must develop protocols with school districts specifying strategies for communication, coordination, and collaboration regarding the status and progress of foster children placed in the region, in order to maximize the educational continuity and achievement for foster children.

DSHS must establish an oversight committee, composed of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies, to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care.

DSHS must work with the AOC to develop protocols to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The striking amendment adds a statutory cross-reference regarding schools sharing student information.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Children in foster care have more challenges facing them and are more likely to drop out of school. Making an effort to allow them to remain in their own school will help provide some stability to their lives.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Allan Paulson, Treehouse (pro); Phoebe Anderson, Treehouse (pro); Erin Lawrence, Treehouse (pro); Laverne Lamoureux, Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration (pro); Carol Taylor Cann, WA St. PTA (pro); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society (pro).