

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 3115

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to establishing a foster parent critical support and retention program.

Brief Description: Establishing a foster parent critical support and retention program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Darneille, Talcott, Morrell, Green, McDonald, Ormsby, Simpson and Roberts).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/1/06, 2/2/06 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/4/06 [DP2S(w/o sub CFS)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/06, 98-0.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 3/3/06, 45-0.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates a foster parent critical support and retention program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Children & Family Services. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Buri, Chandler, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, P. Sullivan, Talcott and Walsh.

Staff: Amy Skei (786-7140).

Background:

Washington's child welfare system includes a program for foster parent pre-service training as well as a program for recruitment of foster parents. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for recruiting an adequate number of prospective foster and adoptive homes, including both regular and specialized homes. In 1990, the Legislature directed the DSHS to develop and implement a project to recruit more foster homes and adoptive homes for special needs children. Within each of the state's six regions, the DSHS must contract with one or more licensed foster care or adoption agencies to enhance the efforts of the DSHS.

In addition to efforts by the DSHS, various other entities strive to provide support for foster parents. Support efforts include foster parent crisis support hotlines, low-cost or no-cost training opportunities and workshops, monthly newsletters, and local foster parent support groups.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

The Division of Children and Family Services Division within the DSHS is directed to establish a critical support and retention program for foster parents who care for children who act out sexually, are physically assaultive, or who have other high-risk behaviors. The program will be implemented under the Division's contract and supervision area. Contractors must demonstrate experience providing in-home case management to foster homes licensed through the Division.

The program must include:

- (1) 24-hour emergency assistance seven days a week;
- (2) assessment of risk and development of a safety and supervision plan;
- (3) home-based foster parent training utilizing evidence-based models;
- (4) on-going support groups; and
- (5) referral to community services.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

For purpose of the Foster Parent Critical Support and Retention Program (Program) established by the bill:

Changes references from children who are sexually reactive and children who act out sexually to sexually aggressive youth (a statutorily defined term);Directs that Program services consist of short-term therapeutic and educational interventions to support the stability of the placement;Adds a Program requirement that foster parents receive health care information, disclosure of which must be consistent with the Department of Health recommendations regarding disclosure and testing for and disclosure of information related to blood-borne pathogens.

For the purpose of referrals, investigations, and records regarding allegations of child abuse and neglect:

Requires the DSHS to destroy all electronic records of: screened-out reports within 30 days; unfounded reports within one year after investigation is completed; and inconclusive reports within 6 years after investigation is completed. Creates statutory definitions for screened-out, inconclusive, and founded allegations of child abuse and neglect. Amends the definition of unfounded allegations of abuse and neglect. Limits the DSHS and law enforcement authority to interview children to only those cases screened-in for investigation. Requires the DSHS to maintain records only of founded cases of abuse and neglect. Creates rights to seek injunctive relief and monetary penalties, including attorney fees, for DSHS failure to comply.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Children & Family Services) (In support) A proven successful foster parent retention and support program has been operating in Pierce County for several years and has been funded through budget proviso. This program supports foster parents who serve youth who are sexually reactive and/or physically assaultive. These often are the children who have suffered repeated abuse before being removed from home. Foster parents who care for these children are a vital part of the process of helping these children to heal and preventing them from growing up to possibly become abusers of others. Because of the preparation, training, and on-going support provided through the program, there has been a 100 percent retention of these foster parents.

This is a way for the state to actively engage in saving more of these children from experiencing multiple placements that inevitably occur when foster parents are unprepared or unskilled in managing the special needs of these children.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) This bill would apply statewide the model that currently operates very effectively in region five. It would provide planning and training for foster parents to help stop undesirable behaviors before they manifest themselves. This will save money and reduce incarceration.

Testimony Against: (Children & Family Services) (Opposed) There is an existing program in Pierce County that has been successful in retaining foster parents for special needs children. We have concerns regarding the fiscal impact because this program was not included in the Governor's budget. There is also language in the intent section which overestimates the criminal behavior of these children and the number of placements these children experience. The DSHS has developed a workgroup that includes representatives from the Pierce County program to assist in implementing a foster parent retention program using evidence-based practice.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Children & Family Services) (In support) Representative Darneille, prime sponsor; Representative Talcott; Kris Baglio and Brenda Hayes, Metropolitan Development Council; and Charlotte Greene.

(Opposed) Chris Robinson, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Chris Baglio and Bob Gee, Metropolitan Development Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Children & Family Services) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.