

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5830

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Children's Services

**Title:** An act relating to home visitation services for families.

**Brief Description:** Providing home visitation services for families.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, Brown, Rasmussen, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe and Shin).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Children's Services: 3/20/07, 3/23/07 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Directs the Children's Trust of Washington to fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs for improving parenting skills and outcomes for children.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Halder, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Hinkle, Pettigrew and Roberts.

**Staff:** Chris Alejano (786-7115).

**Background:**

Home visitation programs deliver services in the home to parents and children and aim to alleviate the effects various family risk factors have on child development. Home visitation programs share a focus on the importance of children's early years, the pivotal role parents play in shaping children's lives, and the belief that one of the best ways to reach families with young children is by bringing the services to them, rather than expecting those families to seek assistance in the community. Offering the services in the home eliminates barriers such as

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transportation and time and provides a more personalized experience by allowing families to interact in a comfortable and natural environment. Current research provides significant evidence of the effectiveness of home visitation programs as an early intervention strategy.

The Legislature created the Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN) and the Children's Trust Fund in 1982. The WCPCAN is a 14-member, Governor appointed council legislated to promote prevention of child abuse and neglect, and to encourage and support effective community prevention efforts.

In 1993, the Legislature enacted HB 1991 authorizing the five agencies comprising the Family Policy Council (the Department of Health, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Department of Employment Security) to develop a program plan for the Home Health Visitor Program for the purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect. Due to funding constraints and other limitations, however, no coordinated program of home visitation services was implemented.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

Definitions for the terms *evidence-based*, *home visitation*, and *research-based* are created.

Within available funds, the Children's Trust of Washington is granted authority to fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs designed to improve parenting skills and outcomes for children. The home visitation programs must be voluntary and be directed to serve families at high risk. The Children's Trust of Washington shall develop a plan with the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, and the Family Policy Council to coordinate or consolidate home visitation services for children and families and report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2007, with their recommendations for implementation of the plan.

The Home Visitor Program in the Department of Health statute is repealed.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill removes "no parent fluent in English" as a risk factor for having a greater chance of failure in school, adds improving school readiness as an outcome for parents and children involved in home visitation programs, and removes the child abuse or neglect language specifying the kind of families at-risk that home visitation services are intended to serve. The amended bill also adds a new definitions section to be applied to this act including terms for *evidence-based*, *home visitation*, and *research-based*. In addition the amended bill removes heterogeneous populations as a required component of random controlled trials in the definition of evidence-based, and authorizes the Children's Trust of Washington to fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs for improving parenting skills and outcomes for children. The amended bill directs the Children's Trust of Washington, the

Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, and the Family Policy Council to develop a plan to coordinate or consolidate home visitation services for children and families and report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2007, with recommendations for implementation of the plan, and changes the name of the Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to the Children's Trust of Washington.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Having home visitation services available for families, particularly low-income families and families with limited English proficiency, is really important. The home visitation programs are voluntary.

Parents As Teachers has always paralleled their programs with First Steps serving high-risk women and children, prenatal up to age 3. Home visitors support parents and educate them about their child's developmental milestones. Thus far the program has been funded by grants but hopes to have more sustainable funding.

The WCPCAN has a 25-year history of investing in a variety of home visitation and parent education programs that are voluntary and support parents. Home visitations have a variety of target outcomes including preventing child abuse and neglect, parent-child bond, school readiness, child health, knowledge of child development, and early detection of developmental delays.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Laura Wells, Fight Crime: Invest in Youth; Chief Sam Granato, City of Yakima, Police Department; Linda Clark and Mary Brown, Providence Sound Home Care Maternal Child Health; Dr. Jill Sells, Docs for Tots; Kristen Rogers, Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; and Kathy Zeisel, Parents as Teachers and Parent Trust for Washington Children.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.