

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5308

As Passed Senate, February 27, 2013

Title: An act relating to establishing the commercially sexually exploited children statewide coordinating committee.

Brief Description: Establishing the commercially sexually exploited children statewide coordinating committee.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Carrell, Darneille, Padden, Kline, Hargrove, Fraser, Chase, Keiser, Conway, Cleveland and Tom).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/04/13, 2/11/13 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 2/27/13, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5308 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Carrell, Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Member; Hargrove, Harper and Padden.

Staff: Joan Miller (786-7784)

Background: The recruitment, transportation, and sale of people for labor is a problem in Washington State. Several factors make Washington prone to human trafficking, including an international border with Canada, an abundance of ports, vast rural areas, and dependency on agricultural workers. Seattle is part of a trafficking circuit that can include Honolulu, Las Vegas, New Orleans, Portland, Vancouver – Clark County, Yakima, and Canada. Trafficking has occurred in 18 Washington State counties.

Traffickers often prey on individuals who are poor, frequently unemployed or underemployed, and who may lack access to social safety nets. Victims range from domestic workers to mail-order brides to commercially sexually exploited children. Sex trafficking victims, in particular, are often minors who have been recruited, transported, or obtained to perform commercial sex acts, which are any sex acts done in exchange for monetary or other nonmonetary gain.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Statewide Coordinating Committee (Committee) is established to address the issue of children who are commercially sexually exploited, examine the practices of local and regional entities involved in addressing sexually exploited children, and make recommendations on statewide laws and practices.

The Committee is called to order by the Governor's office, and the prescribed membership includes legislators, representatives from state and local agencies, and relevant criminal justice entities.

The duties of the Committee include, but are not limited to, receiving reports and data from local and regional entities regarding the incidence of commercially sexually exploited children in their areas; reviewing recommendations from local and regional entities regarding policy changes that would improve the effectiveness of local response practices; and making recommendations regarding data collection and strategic local investments to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The Committee must meet no less than annually.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: The Center for Children and Youth Justice (Center) received a grant from the Washington State Children's Justice Interdisciplinary Task Force to provide and develop a statewide protocol that would offer more coordinated, effective, and child-centered responses to cases involving commercially sexually exploited children. This is the first time that anyone has tried this at the state level. The Center held summits to generate data about trafficking, and the consensus was that we need to be victim-centered and engage in best practices that we know will work. This bill would be of extreme importance to our project and to legislators trying to address the exploitation of children. Establishing this committee is essential for collecting data. A model that engages all the parties has been proven to be successful, and the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs requests a seat on the Committee. Commercially sexually exploited children often have needs that criminal defense lawyers need to address, such as prior convictions, and it would be a good idea to have that perspective on the Committee. Grassroots organizations, who are rising up to fight this issue, should also have a seat on the Committee because in some ways that will hold the government's representatives accountable.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Justice Bobbe Bridge, President and CEO, Center for Children and Youth Justice; Bob Cooper, WA Defender Assn., WA Assn. of Criminal Defense Lawyers; Rose Gundersen, WA Engage; Lonnie Johns-Brown, WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs.