

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6429

As of February 7, 2014

Title: An act relating to the advisory committee on the disproportionate representation of children of color in Washington's child welfare system.

Brief Description: Concerning the expiration of the advisory committee on the disproportionate representation of children of color in Washington's child welfare system.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille, Hargrove, Chase and Kline; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/04/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Joan Miller (786-7784)

Background: In 2007 the Legislature directed the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to convene an advisory committee to analyze and make recommendations on the disproportionate representation of children of color in the Washington State child welfare system.

The membership of the committee includes experts in social work, law, child welfare, psychology, and related fields; two or more tribal representatives; one representative of a community-based organization involved with child welfare; one representative from DSHS; one current or former foster youth; one current or former foster parent; one parent previously involved with Washington's child welfare or juvenile justice system; and a representative from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

The committee was directed to investigate whether racial disproportionality exists in Washington's child welfare system and, if so, to identify those decision points in the system where disproportionality occurs. The Legislature also directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to provide technical assistance to the committee.

In June 2008 the committee and WSIPP reported the results of their analysis of outcomes for about 58,000 children who were referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) in 2004. The analysis followed these children through 2007 and reflected that patterns of

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disproportionality were evident at the time of reports to CPS alleging child abuse or neglect and within the child welfare system.

The committee, in conjunction with the Secretary of DSHS, created a remediation plan to safely reduce racial disproportionality, and the committee is responsible for ongoing evaluation. Some examples of activities recommended by the committee included the implementation of cultural competency and anti-racism training, kinship care policies, and the implementation of a racial equity impact analysis tool. The Secretary of DSHS must report annually to the Legislature on any measurable progress made in reducing and eliminating racial disproportionality in the state's child welfare system.

The committee and its duties originally expired on June 30, 2013, and was later extended to June 30, 2014.

Summary of Bill: The committee must develop membership rules by August 1, 2014, which must be included in the Secretary of DSHS's annual report.

The sunset date on June 30, 2014, is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Membership rules and the sunset date for the Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee are two things I looked at when I became Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration (CA). I decided that committee memberships should rotate because you need fresh ideas. The sunset date was removed because the committee does a really good job of keeping the issue of racial disproportionality of kids in our care in front of us. We have a management leadership team meeting every month, and racial disproportionality is on the agenda every month. We have made progress in a number of areas, although there is still overrepresentation of Native American children in the child welfare system. CA will continue to do this work even if the committee is allowed to expire, but we think it would speak well to the Legislature to keep the committee in statute.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jennifer Strus, DSHS – CA.