S-1333.2

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**SENATE BILL 5897**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Cleveland, Darneille, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, and Chase

AN ACT Relating to providing funding for medical evaluations of suspected victims of child abuse; adding a new section to chapter 7.68 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature established the crime victims' compensation fund in 1973 to cover medical bills and other costs associated with being the victim of a crime. State law requires the crime victims' compensation fund to pay the costs of sexual assault examinations when they are performed to gather evidence for possible prosecution. Currently, child sexual abuse exams are eligible for reimbursement through the crime victims' compensation fund, but child physical abuse exams are not eligible for the same reimbursement.

(2) The legislature intends to address this disparity by requiring that the state pay for the medical examination of children who may be victims of felony-level physical abuse. This population represents a small percentage of all child abuse referrals. For instance, of all examinations performed by the child abuse assessment team affiliated with the Clark county children's justice center in Vancouver, Washington in 2014 for suspected child abuse, only eight and one-half percent of exams resulted in felony-level referrals. These victims are a particularly vulnerable population, as they are often too young or too afraid to speak for themselves. The legislature finds that requiring the cost of these examinations to be borne by the state will incentivize timely evaluations, lead to early identification of abuse, and potentially prevent a child from further traumatization or injury.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 7.68 RCW to read as follows:

No costs incurred by an institution as defined by RCW 26.44.020 for the examination of a suspected victim of assault of a child under chapter 9A.36 RCW may be billed or charged directly or indirectly to the suspected victim of the assault. The costs must be paid by the state pursuant to this chapter.

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