

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6560

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, January 31, 2018

Title: An act relating to ensuring that no youth is discharged from a public system of care into homelessness.

Brief Description: Ensuring that no youth is discharged from a public system of care into homelessness.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille, Billig, Frockt, Hunt, Kuderer, Palumbo and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/30/18, 1/31/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) to develop a plan to ensure that, by December 31, 2019, no youth is discharged from a public system of care into homelessness.
- Requires OHY to submit this plan to the Legislature and Governor by December 31, 2018, and requires a response from each by March 31, 2019.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6560 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Dhingra, Vice Chair; O'Ban, Ranking Member; Carlyle, Frockt and Miloscia.

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

Background: The Legislature created OHY within the Department of Commerce in 2015. OHY is responsible for leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth and improving the safety, health, and welfare of homeless youth in the state. Additionally, OHY was authorized to provide the management

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and oversight of HOPE Centers, Crisis Residential Centers, street youth services, and the Independent Youth Housing Program.

One of the five stated goals of OHY for youth and young adults is stable housing. Specifically, homeless youth should have a safe and healthy place to sleep each night until permanency can be reached, homeless youth should have access to housing that gives them a safe, healthy, and supported launching pad to adulthood, every family in crisis should have appropriate support as they work to keep their children housed and safe, and that every homeless youth discharged from a public system of care in our state will not be discharged into homelessness.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): OHY must develop a plan, with specific state agency actions and any legislative recommendations, to ensure that, by December 31, 2019, no youth is discharged from a public system of care into homelessness.

OHY must submit the plan to the Legislature and Governor by December 31, 2018. The Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature must respond to the plan by March 31, 2019.

A declaration provides that it is the goal of the Legislature that any youth discharged from a public system of care will be discharged into safe and stable housing beginning January 1, 2020, and this policy applies in a judicial hearing pertaining to the commitment of the youth or in any collateral proceeding that involves the custody of the youth.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Modifies the declaration of intent so that it is the goal of the Legislature that any youth discharged from a public system of care will be discharged into safe and stable housing with such policy applying to relevant proceedings involving the youth as opposed to the Legislature creating any potential enforceable right of the youth in those proceedings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: There are disturbing outcomes when youth leave a public system of care and have nowhere to go. The idea of no transitional planning for youth in public systems of care is unconscionable. Prior Department of Social and Health Services studies have shown that 36 percent of foster kids and 25 percent of juvenile rehabilitation youth who leave the system at age 18 are homeless within one year. The state is culpable in allowing youth to fall into homelessness. Behavioral health programs

are culpable as well, since 48 percent of those treated in such programs become homeless within one year. There has only been a piecemeal approach over the years to gradually keep youth out of homelessness. With the appropriate policies and resources, youth homelessness is solvable. By providing safe housing and a path forward, investing in youth is a cost-saving measure for the state. There is also a return on the investment of providing services to youth that exit from the public systems of care. It is more cost-effective to assign youth a navigator or case manager before being discharged to help them access the services and help they require. The initiation of OHY and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families sets up a new vision for the state in addressing the treatment of youth earlier in their lives.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeannie Darneille, Prime Sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Jim Theofelis, A Way Home Washington; Mary Van Cleve, Columbia Legal Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.