

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5398

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning

Title: An act relating to domestic violence funding allocation.

Brief Description: Concerning domestic violence funding allocation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators MacEwen and Wilson, L.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 3/22/23, 3/24/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services Domestic Violence Services Program to convene a work group to review and update the formula used to determine the allocation of funding for domestic violence victim services agencies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Eslick, Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Rule and Walsh.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Domestic Violence Services Program administers state and federal funding dedicated to providing emergency shelter and

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supportive services for victims of domestic violence and their dependent children.

The DSHS, in consultation with relevant agencies and other stakeholders, must develop and maintain a plan for delivering domestic violence victim services, prevention efforts, and access to emergency shelters across the state; establish minimum standards for certain domestic violence programs and emergency shelter programs; distribute grants and evaluate funded programs for compliance; and administer funds from the Domestic Violence Prevention Account for culturally specific prevention efforts and services, age appropriate prevention and intervention services for children and youth, and awareness and prevention outreach efforts.

The DSHS may award grants on a contract basis to public or private nonprofit entities, or individuals providing community-based domestic violence services, emergency shelter services, domestic violence hotline or information and referral services, or prevention efforts meeting minimum standards established by the DSHS. In awarding grants, the DSHS must consider need, geographic location, population ratios, the needs of specific underserved and cultural populations, and the extent of existing services.

Summary of Bill:

The DSHS Domestic Violence Services Program must convene a work group to review and update the formula used to determine the allocation of funding for domestic violence victim services agencies. The work group must include, but is not limited to, representatives of:

- the DSHS;
- the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy;
- the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence;
- at least nine DSHS contracted domestic violence victim services agencies, three each from the DSHS' regions 1, 2, and 3, representing both small and large capacity shelters; and
- three at-large community-based or tribal domestic violence victim services providers.

The DSHS may hire external consultants, as needed, to assist with the goals of the work group.

By December 1, 2023, the work group must develop recommendations for formulation allocation and provide a copy of the recommendations to the Legislature. The final decision regarding whether to implement the formula allocation recommendations of the work group remains within the discretion of the DSHS; however, implementation of any of the recommendations must be effective starting July 1, 2024.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The current funding model creates barriers for providing sufficient staff and resources to domestic violence shelters. Staff are burned out and spread thin, sometimes having to work seven days a week or double shifts. Having funding allocated according to county rather than the number of people served causes problems. Shelters may serve people from outside their county limits and sometimes out of state. Candidates are lost to counties with better funding. Staff are exposed to trauma and abuse every day, and there is a small pool of people who choose this profession. Changes would help with staffing, expand services, and provide advocates with the resources they need and deserve. The formula should be as equitable as possible to help support survivors across the state, and providers should be able to weigh in on changes. Amendments to change the dates in the bill have support.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Susan Cardona, Turning Pointe Survivor Advocacy Center; and Emily Stone, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.