

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SHB 1109**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, APRIL 3, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Creating a task force on children of substance abusers.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Jones, Peery, Brough, Jacobsen, Miller, Brumsickle, Rasmussen, Betrozoff, Pruitt, G. Fisher, Phillips, Valle, Holland, Dorn, Roland, Dellwo, Braddock, Cole, Sprenkle, R. King, Winsley, Ferguson, Riley, Vance, Wineberry, Scott, Broback, Leonard, R. Johnson, Ludwig, Silver, H. Myers, Cooper and Brekke).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Murray, Oke, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

**Staff:** Susan Mosborg (786-7439)

**Hearing Dates:** March 25, 1991; April 3, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

The Department of Social and Health Services estimates that 10 to 20 percent of all births in the state are to women who misuse alcohol or drugs while pregnant, affecting 7,000 to 14,000 infants each year. Many of these infants have or are expected to have learning impairments such as cognitive and attention deficits, speech-language pathologies, and poor social abilities. These are factors known to place children at risk of school failure. There is little definitive information about the impact drug-affected infants will have on the school system in the coming years. However, many educators and others are concerned that educating drug-affected children will require increased resources and perhaps new educational strategies and techniques.

**SUMMARY:**

An interagency task force on the children of substance abusers is created. The task force is responsible for: (1) identifying the current and projected number of children in Washington who have learning impairments caused by mothers who abused alcohol or drugs during pregnancy, including the number who are in or will be entering Washington public schools; (2) analyzing the adequacy of current social service and public school programs to address the special needs of drug-affected children; (3) analyzing the adequacy of current educational

and treatment programs designed to reduce substance abuse during pregnancy; and (4) developing recommendations for enhancing or replacing existing social service and educational programs serving drug-affected children and their parents.

The task force will include representatives of the Legislature (one member from the majority and minority party of each house); Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); Department of Health; Department of Social and Health Services; Department of Community Development; county health departments; University of Washington's Center for Child Development and Mental Retardation; Washington Education Association; Washington Association of School Administrators; Washington State PTA; the Learning Disability Association of Washington; chemical dependency associations (limited to one representative); and private advocacy groups serving families and children (limited to one representative).

The task force will be staffed by OSPI.

The task force will report its final findings and recommendations to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature before December 1, 1991.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** available

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:**

The duties of the task force are revised. The task force is directed to: (1) consult with the Task Force on Children's Data Collection and Reporting created in SB 5474 to identify current methods of data collection and reporting about drug-affected children in Washington; (2) determine the current and projected number of children in the state born drug affected, and estimate the number that can be expected to have learning impairments during school age; (3) investigate the nature of the special needs of children born drug affected; (4) identify the categories of education and social services in the state likely to be significantly impacted by changes in the number of children born drug affected; (5) identify current education and social service programs designed to address the special problems of drug-affected children; and (6) identify current educational and treatment programs designed to reduce substance abuse during pregnancy.

Based on these findings, the task force shall: (1) examine implications for the public school system and social services in Washington; (2) investigate promising models for addressing the needs of children born drug-affected; (3) investigate ways to prevent the problem of substance abuse during pregnancy;

(4) investigate other relevant issues; and (5) develop recommendations for state action.

Two additional representatives from chemical dependency associations, and two additional representatives from private advocacy groups serving families and children are added to the task force.

Task force members must be appointed within 20 days and begin meeting within 30 days of the effective date of the act.

\$49,000 is appropriated for the task force.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

The problem of drug-affected children is a very large and critical one that cuts across many education and social service areas. A lot of information about children born drug affected is available but not collected. The job of the task force will be to assess where the state should be in one or two years and determine how to get there.

The task force is an excellent idea. The task force should also examine the impact of substance abuse by the father as well as mother. The committee should consider adding additional service providers from the community to the task force and language to ensure cultural diversity on the task force.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** PRO: Representative Evan Jones, prime sponsor; John Pearson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Lonnie Johns-Brown, National Organization of Women; Ken Stark, Department of Social and Health Services Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse