

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 6514-S

March 28, 1996

To the Honorable President and Members,
The Senate of the State of Washington
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 1, Substitute Senate Bill No. 6514 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to preservation services;"

Substitute Senate Bill No. 6514 authorizes the use of paraprofessional workers to provide support services to families receiving preservation services from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) or its contractors. This bill also allows DSHS and its contractors, when using paraprofessionals, to serve more families and to provide preservation services for a longer period of time.

Section 1 of this measure states that it is the intent of the legislature to target preservation services to families "most at risk". This language suggests that DSHS must prioritize the provision of preservation services to families who are at high risk of having their children removed from their home due to abuse or neglect. More specifically, this language may be read as suggesting that the department serve high risk families before serving families who are at lower risk of an out-of-home placement, but who nevertheless have placed their children in danger and who could benefit from services designed to prevent the situation from escalating into a crisis resulting in an out-of-home placement.

While I agree that scarce resources should be targeted whenever possible, section 1 seems to be unduly restrictive and contrary to the prevention-oriented focus of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5885. That important legislation, which was enacted last year and for which the legislature has appropriated funding this year, contained a clear expression of the legislature's intent to provide "up-front services" to strengthen families and to prevent out-of-home placements. Last year's measure also expanded preservation services to include less intensive services for families who are at lower risk of an out-of-home placement.

The 1996 supplemental operating budget, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 6251, expressly provides funding both for the existing intensive preservation services for high risk families and for the new preservation services established last year for lower risk families. Section 1 appears to be inconsistent with this legislative direction.

For these reasons, I have vetoed section 1 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6514.

With the exception of section 1, Substitute Senate Bill No. 6514 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Lowry
Governor