
SENATE BILL 5654

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

By Senators Roach, Swecker, Carrell, and Pflug

Read first time 01/28/09. Referred to Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

1 AN ACT Relating to the creation of a child welfare transparency
2 committee; and adding a new chapter to Title 74 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature is increasingly concerned
5 about the handling of child welfare cases by the children's
6 administration in the department of social and health services. It has
7 been difficult for either the legislature or the public to fully
8 understand the workings of the child welfare system because so much
9 information is kept from public view. The legislature finds that the
10 creation of a transparency committee to review and investigate certain
11 child welfare cases may assist in shedding light on how the children's
12 administration is performing.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1)(a) A child welfare transparency
14 committee is created within each of the six regions of the department
15 of social and health services to review and investigate child welfare
16 cases as provided in this chapter.

17 (b) The members of the committee must be appointed as follows:

1 (i) The governor shall appoint one member for each committee
2 established in each of the department's six regions;

3 (ii) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each
4 of the two largest caucuses of the senate for each committee
5 established in each of the department's six regions; and

6 (iii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one
7 member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of
8 representatives for each committee established in each of the
9 department's six regions.

10 (c) No member can be a current employee of the department, have
11 been employed by the department within the past five years, or have
12 immediate relatives, by blood or marriage, who are currently employed
13 by the department.

14 (d) The names of the members of the committees must be made public.

15 (e) Each committee shall select a chair from among its membership.

16 (f) The members shall serve three-year terms and must be staggered,
17 beginning August 1, 2009.

18 (2)(a) The purpose of the child welfare transparency committee is
19 to review and investigate child welfare cases in which the department
20 of social and health services is currently or has, within the last
21 twelve months, been involved.

22 (b) The committee has the discretion to determine which cases
23 brought to its attention merit review or investigation.

24 (c) To assist the committee in its work, the children's
25 administration shall provide, upon the committee's request, any
26 documents it has regarding the cases being reviewed or investigated by
27 the committee. These documents must be provided within fourteen days
28 of being requested. The children's administration shall also make
29 personnel involved in the case being reviewed or investigated available
30 to the committee if needed.

31 (3) All meetings of the committee must be open to the public,
32 unless the committee is discussing information that is otherwise
33 confidential under state or federal law.

34 (4) The committee may consider input from interested parties.

35 (5) The children's administration shall provide staff support to
36 the committee.

37 (6) Legislative members of the committee must be reimbursed for
38 travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative

1 members, except those representing an employer or organization, are
2 entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW
3 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

4 (7)(a) The chair shall convene an initial meeting of the committee
5 no later than September 1, 2009.

6 (b) The committee must meet at least once a quarter and may hold
7 additional meetings at the call of the chair or by a majority vote of
8 the members of the committee.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Sections 1 through 2 of this act constitute
10 a new chapter in Title 74 RCW.

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