

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2834

As of February 24, 2016

Title: An act relating to implementing the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Brief Description: Concerning implementation of the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Senn, Walsh, Kagi, Fey, Kilduff, Stanford and McBride; by request of Washington State Department of Commerce).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/16, 77-20.

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/23/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

Background: Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (Office). In 2015 the Legislature passed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5404, which created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (Office) within the Department of Commerce (Commerce). The Office is responsible for leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth with a stated goal of preventing state systems from discharging youth and young adults into homelessness. Additionally, the Office was authorized to provide the management and oversight of HOPE Centers, Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs), street youth services, and the Independent Youth Housing Program.

- HOPE Centers provide temporary residential placements for street youth under the age of 18. Youth may self-refer to a HOPE Center for services, and entering a center is voluntary. While residing in a HOPE Center, youth undergo a comprehensive assessment in order to develop the best plan for the youth.
- The CRCs are short-term, semi-secure facilities for runaway youth and adolescents in conflict with their families. Youth cannot remain in a CRC more than 15 consecutive days. Counselors at a CRC work with the family to resolve the immediate conflict and develop better ways of dealing with the conflict in the future. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for licensing CRCs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): Commerce oversees Washington's HMIS. The HMIS is used by state and federally funded homeless and housing service providers to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness and to households at-risk of losing their housing. The purpose of HMIS is to provide information on the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the state. Homeless persons may opt-in to HMIS although HMIS does not currently collect data for unaccompanied homeless youth.

Summary of Bill: DSHS may share certain child welfare records with the Commerce for purposes of meeting the service needs of youth admitted to CRCs or HOPE Centers under contract with the Office. The administrator of a CRC must notify the DSHS of duties related to the admission only if the child is a dependent. Commerce is responsible for collecting and distributing information on state agencies who agree to participate in a multidisciplinary team working with the administrator of a CRC. Payments for a HOPE Center bed are not contingent upon approval from the DSHS.

The definition of "child in need of services petition" is modified to clarify that that it is the role of the DSHS to file a petition and not the responsibility of Commerce.

Unaccompanied youth ages 13 and older may consent to the collection of personally identifying information for purposes of the Washington HMIS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill provides solutions to the Homeless Youth Act. Unaccompanied youth can give consent. Providers currently comply with Becca laws. If youth can't consent, then they can't be counted, and then we won't know if the program is effective or how to allocate funding. The children want to be counted, but can't give consent as minors; this bill will engage the youth, build trust, and provide more accurate intake. Includes a timeline of resources, notifying guardians, DSHS, and police as providers. This bill aims to do everything possible to make sure youth are safe and don't spend another night on the streets. Parents are notified anywhere between 8 and 72 hours; if the children are in foster care, the timeline shrinks to under 8 hours. The goal is to reunite families when the child is not in jeopardy. The spirit of the bill is to make data-based changes, but if we can't collect youth data, then there won't be data-based changes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Senn, Prime Sponsor; Elizabeth Trautman, YouthCare; Derek Harris, Community Youth Services/Deputy Director and Scott Hanauer, Community Youth Services/CEO; and Tedd Kelleher, Department of Commerce.

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