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**HOUSE BILL 2798**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Kagi and Jinkins

AN ACT Relating to the baby court initiative; adding a new section to chapter 2.56 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes that a critical need exists for child and family services programs to prevent the incidence of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment. These programs also need to minimize the incidence of childhood trauma on small children and provide stability to parents and children within the state. It is the intent of the legislature to create an initiative to support early interventions with substance abusing parents through county treatment courts.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 2.56 RCW to read as follows:

(1) As used in this section, "baby court" means an intensive court process for families with a child under age six who has been found dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW. A baby court must:

(a) Establish a process for parents with a documented need for substance use disorder treatment to voluntarily participate in baby court;

(b) Review at least every thirty days whether the parent or parents are actively engaged and adequately progressing toward achieving the case plan;

(c) Provide access to the appropriate substance use disorder treatment;

(d) Aim to reduce the removal of young children from parents and reunify young children with parents by surrounding at-risk families with support services;

(e) Aim to reduce incidences of abuse and neglect among young children;

(f) Reduce the long-term and short-term effects of traumatic experiences on the brain development of children under age six; and

(g) Promote effective interaction and the use of resources among the court and public and private child and family services providers.

(2) The family and juvenile court improvement grant program established in RCW 2.56.220 shall:

(a) Develop standards for baby courts;

(b) Develop a process where any superior court, and not just those receiving grant funds under RCW 2.56.230, may apply for grant funds from the family and juvenile court improvement grant program created in RCW 2.56.220 to establish a baby court;

(c) By January 1, 2019, distribute grant funds to support baby courts in five superior courts that serve both rural and urban populations in all three of the regions established by the children's administration of the department of social and health services as of the effective date of this section;

(d) Develop and define the outcome measures for baby courts;

(e) Collect outcome measure data that is included in an annual report that must be submitted to fiscal committees of the legislature beginning December 1, 2020. This annual report must summarize the results of baby courts during the previous year, including data on the outcomes achieved in baby courts compared to the outcomes achieved by general dependency courts, and any cost savings associated with achieving the goals established for baby courts in subsection (1) of this section; and

(f) Sponsor and coordinate training for judicial officers and other professionals that participate in baby courts receiving grant funding pursuant to this section.

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