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**Early Learning & Human Services  
Committee**

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**SSB 5522**

**Brief Description:** Requiring the department of social and health services to collect and publicly report information on the safe surrender of newborn children.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health & Housing (originally sponsored by Senators Palumbo, Fain and Nelson).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to annually report to the public the number of newborns safely transferred to appropriate persons who can summon immediate care for the newborn and those newborns who are abandoned.

**Hearing Date:** 2/15/18

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

**Background:**

*Safe Transfer of Newborns.*

A parent of a newborn infant less than 72 hours old may transfer that newborn to certain people in certain locations without incurring criminal liability.

The locations that are available for the safe transfer of newborns include:

- the emergency department of licensed hospitals during the hours of hospital operation;
- a fire station during hours of operation while fire personnel are present; or
- a federally designated rural health clinic during normal hours of operation.

The persons to whom parents may safely transfer newborns include:

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- any person that the parent believes is an employee, volunteer, or medical staff member who represents to the parent that he or she can and will summon appropriate resources to meet the newborn's immediate needs; or
- a firefighter, volunteer, or emergency medical technician at a fire station who represents to the parent that he or she can and will summon appropriate resources to meet the newborn's immediate needs.

The person to whom the parent transfers the newborn to must not require the parent to provide any identifying information and shall attempt to protect the anonymity of the parent. This person must also provide referral information about adoption options, counseling, appropriate medical and aftercare services, domestic violence, and legal rights to the parent seeking transfer of the newborn.

Each safe transfer location is required to post signs indicating that the location is an appropriate place for the safe and legal transfer of newborns.

In 2009 the Governor vetoed one section of a bill that required the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to collect and compile information concerning the number and medical condition of newborns transferred:

- to qualified persons at appropriate locations that can summon the resources to meet the newborn's immediate needs and prevent parents from being subjected to certain criminal liability; and
- in a manner that does not protect parents from criminal liability and allow for the immediate care of newborns.

**Summary of Bill:**

The DSHS must collect and compile the following:

- information concerning the number of newborns who are transferred to qualified persons at appropriate locations that can summon the resources to meet the newborn's immediate needs and prevent parents from being subjected to certain criminal liability; and
- the number of newborns abandoned in a manner that does not protect parents from criminal liability and allow for the immediate care of newborns.

The DSHS must report its findings regarding newborn transfer annually to the public beginning on July 31, 2017.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.