SENATE BILL REPORT
SSB 5522

As Passed Senate, June 13, 2017

Title: An act relating to requiring the department of social and health services to collect and publicly report information on the safe surrender of newborn children.

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 History:
    Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/06/17, 2/14/17 [DPS, DNP].
    Floor Activity:
        Passed Senate: 2/28/17, 48-1.
        Second Special Session: Passed Senate: 6/13/17, 46-1.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to collect and compile information regarding abandoned newborn babies.

- Requires DSHS to report its findings annually beginning July 31, 2017.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5522 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.
    Signed by Senators O'Ban, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Hunt and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
    Signed by Senator Padden.

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

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.

Background: In 2002, the Safety of Newborn Children Act was enacted offering a safe place to leave a newborn child, confidentially, and without fear of punishment. A parent, within 72 hours of a child's birth, can transfer the baby to a qualified person at a hospital, fire station, or federally designated rural health clinic, and do so anonymously without fear of criminal prosecution for abandoning, or failing to support, the child. Safe haven laws have been adopted in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The National Safe Haven Alliance estimates that over 1000 infants have been saved over the past decade under safe haven laws.

Following the abandonment of a deceased newborn girl on the side of a road near a hospital in 2014, King County created the Safety of Newborn Children Task Force (Task Force) to examine ways to improve the implementation of the Safety of Newborn Children Act throughout King County. One of the Task Force's recommendations is to develop protocols with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) for annually reviewing Child Protective Services' intake data on newborns relinquished under the Safety of Newborns Act.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: DSHS must collect and compile information regarding: (1) the number of newborns transferred under the Safety of Newborn Children Act; and (2) the number of newborns abandoned within the state not transferred under the Safety of Newborn Children law.

DSHS is to report its findings to the public annually, which may be by posting on its website, beginning July 31, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *Testimony from 2017 Regular Session. The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The idea for this bill is the result of the work of a taskforce in 2014. The goal is to better communicate to the public regarding the Safe Surrender Act and this bill accomplishes that by improving data sharing between agencies. In the House, there was testimony about removing the reporting of medical conditions due to privacy concerns. King County is supportive of removing this language.

Persons Testifying: PRO: April Putney, King County.

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