

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5493

As of February 12, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing a board of advisors to provide local guidance to community services offices operated by the department of social and health services.

Brief Description: Establishing a board of advisors to provide local guidance to community services offices operated by the department of social and health services.

Sponsors: Senators Zeiger, Darneille and Walsh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/05/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a board of advisors at each community service office to provide advice, guidance, and coordinate collaborations with community partners.
- Specifies board membership.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides direct client services to the public through a network of 54 local community services offices (CSOs). At a CSO, a person can access a number of services, including:

- applying for benefits or submitting documents;
- completing an interview for cash or food assistance;
- reporting changes for any of a recipient's benefits;
- Working Connections Child Care Services via phone or online portals; and
- WorkFirst/Social Services case management.

In CSOs there are computers available during regular business hours in office lobbies for DSHS business use, WorkSource Job Seeker and Washington Apple Healthcare.

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.

Summary of Bill: Board of Advisors. A board of advisors is established at each local CSO to provide advice, guidance, and coordinate collaborations with community partners. Each board of advisors may:

- provide input into community services office operations;
- enhance community connections between the community services office and relevant sectors of the community;
- improve local accountability for the delivery of human services; and
- promote innovation.

The regional administrator for DSHS is to meet monthly with each board of advisors in that region to present local data, trends, and recommendations. The regional administrator is to respond in writing to written questions and recommendations posed by the board of advisors, within thirty days.

Membership. The county legislative authority of the county where the CSO is located or, in the case of multiple counties, the county legislative authority of the county which contributes the highest population to the catchment area of the CSO is, in consultation with staff from the Economic Services Administration, appoints the following advisors to the board of advisors for each CSO to serve staggered, renewable three-year terms:

- a representative of each county and city government contained within the community services office catchment area;
- a representative from a local human services or housing nonprofit;
- a representative from the local business community;
- a client of the CSO with lived experience of homelessness or insecure housing;
- a local representative from the market rate housing developer community; and
- a representative of a local behavioral health provider.

If the catchment area of the community services office intersects with tribal land, the governor shall request that the tribe appoint a tribal representative to the board of advisors. Each board of advisors must also incorporate the state legislators who serve the community services office catchment area, as ex officio member, and the administrator of the CSO, as a nonvoting member.

Community services office means a local office within a region defined by DSHS which processes applications for public assistance.

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: PRO: CSOs provide great service and are an integral part of the state's strategy to reduce poverty. They have valuable connections and relationships with the community, but there is room for additional collaboration which is the idea behind having a Board of Advisors at all CSOs. We live in a network society, people

want to be involved with government, and in government we need new ways to receive input. The Board of Advisors is a vehicle for feedback. Support of strategies to implement this idea while reducing the cost; such as three regional administrator meetings per year, instead of 12.

OTHER: The Community Services Division of the Economic Services Administration of DSHS, recognize the need to engage at the local level. Some people show up at CSOs for services the CSOs do not provide and they would like to do better. Community Services Division is working to transform the case management structure to make a broader community connection, and to better serve clients. CSOs are nationally recognized for their delivery of public assistance benefits; they are decreasing processing and wait times. There is a concern about how to manage input from local boards which could impact the statewide model. At the local level there are 27 local planning agencies (LPAs), which serves as a forum for delivery of services, although there is more of a WorkFirst focus. LPAs meet regularly, about six times a year, look at programs, and develop strategy plans. Local partners stay informed about policy this way. Many local planning agencies will develop pilots. In Snohomish, there is an expanded LPA with a partnership beyond WorkFirst/TANF, to human services providers who work with low-income individuals, local and state government representatives, local business, legal advocates, and health care. There are only three regions in ESD so it would take all of their time to prepare and participate in monthly board of advisor meetings in each of the local 54 CSOs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Babette Roberts, DSHS/ESA/CSD.

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