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**Human Services, Youth, & Early  
Learning Committee**

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**HB 2185**

**Brief Description:** Concerning the oversight board for children, youth, and families.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dent, Senn, Reed, Graham, Tharinger and Reeves.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Moves authority for the Oversight Board for Children, Youth, and Families (Oversight Board) from the Governor's Office to the Legislature.
- Modifies membership of the Oversight Board.

**Hearing Date:** 1/16/24

**Staff:** Luke Wickham

**Background:**

*Department of Children, Youth, and Families.*

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created in 2017. In 2018, the DCYF assumed responsibility over child welfare and early learning functions previously held by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Early Learning. On July 1, 2019, the DCYF assumed responsibility over juvenile justice programs previously administered by the DSHS.

*Oversight Board for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.*

The Oversight Board for Children, Youth, and Families (Oversight Board) was created in 2017, along with the creation of the DCYF. The Oversight Board held its first meetings in 2018. The

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Oversight Board is authorized to monitor and ensure that the DCYF achieves certain outcomes and complies with policies and rules.

The Oversight Board has powers to:

- receive reports of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO);
- obtain access to relevant records in the possession of the OFCO;
- select its officers and adoption of rules for orderly procedure;
- request investigations by the OFCO of administrative acts;
- request and receive information, outcome data, documents, materials, and records from the DCYF relating to children and family welfare, juvenile rehabilitation, juvenile justice, and early learning;
- determine whether the DCYF is achieving certain performance measures;
- review whether the DCYF licensors appropriately and consistently applied agency rules in inspection reports; and
- conduct annual reviews of a sample of the DCYF contracts for services from a variety of program and service areas to ensure that those contracts are performance-based.

The Oversight Board consists of 21 members, including:

- two Senators and two House of Representatives members from the Legislature, with one member from each major caucus;
- one nonvoting representative from the Office of the Governor;
- one subject matter expert in early learning;
- one subject matter expert in child welfare;
- one subject matter expert in juvenile rehabilitation and justice;
- one subject matter expert in eliminating disparities in child outcomes by family income, race, and ethnicity;
- one tribal representative from west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- one tribal representative from east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains;
- one current or former foster parent representative;
- one representative of an organization that advocates for the best interest of the child;
- one parent stakeholder group representative;
- one law enforcement representative;
- one child welfare caseworker representative;
- one early childhood learning program implementation practitioner;
- one current or former foster youth under age 25;
- one individual under age 25 with current or previous experience with the juvenile justice system;
- one physician with experience working with children or youth; and
- one judicial representative presiding over child welfare court proceedings or other children's matters.

Nonlegislative members of the Oversight Board are nominated by the Governor, subject to approval of the appointed legislators, and serve four-year terms. When nominating and approving members of the Oversight Board, the Governor and appointed legislators must ensure

that at least five of the Oversight Board members reside east of the Cascade Mountain range.

The Oversight Board must convene at least two stakeholder meetings per year regarding contracting with the DCYF. The Oversight Board must also review surveys of providers, customers, parent groups, and external services to assess whether the DCYF is effectively delivering services.

**Summary of Bill:**

The authority for the Oversight Board for Children, Youth, and Families (Oversight Board) is transferred from the Governor's Office to the Legislature. The facilities and operations committee of the Senate and the executive rules committee of the House of Representatives has authority over the operational policies, procedures and oversight of the Oversight Board.

The membership of the Oversight Board is modified to:

- specify that the representative of an organization who advocates for the best interest of the child may be a current or recent representative of that organization;
- specify that the foster youth may be a current or recent foster youth without requiring that the person is under age 25;
- specify that the individual with experience in the juvenile justice system has current or recent experience with that system without requiring that the person is under age 25; and
- add a subject matter expert on education for youth who are placed in a juvenile justice institution or dependent.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 11, 2024.

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