

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5355

As of January 26, 2023

Title: An act relating to mandating instruction on sex trafficking prevention and identification for students in grades seven through 12.

Brief Description: Mandating instruction on sex trafficking prevention and identification for students in grades seven through 12.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Valdez and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/26/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts to provide instruction on sex trafficking prevention and identification at least once between grades 7 and 12 beginning no later than the 2024-25 school year.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Educational Materials Regarding Sex Offenses. In 2014, the Legislature directed the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, in consultation with other entities, to update existing educational materials about how to prevent children from being recruited into sex trafficking. Sexual health education should include age-appropriate information about the legal elements of sex offenses where a minor is a victim, and the consequences upon conviction.

Coordinated Program for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse, Child Abuse, and Neglect. Subject to appropriations, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must be the lead agency and assist the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and school districts

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to establish a coordinated program for the prevention of sexual abuse of students in grades K-12, child abuse, and neglect.

When developing the program, consideration must be given to training for children that includes:

- the right of every child to live free of abuse;
- how to disclose incidents of abuse and neglect;
- the availability of support resources and how to obtain help;
- child safety training and age-appropriate self-defense techniques; and
- a period of crisis counseling and reporting immediately following the completion of each children's workshop in a school setting which maximizes the child's privacy and sense of safety.

Summary of Bill: Beginning no later than the 2024-25 school year, school districts must provide instruction on sex trafficking prevention and identification at least once between grades 7 and 12.

The instruction may be a stand-alone course or integrated into other relevant courses, or an existing course may be repurposed to include this instruction.

The instruction must include:

- information related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status as it relates to victims and perpetrators;
- medically and legally accurate definitions and information related to how these terms become stigmatized; and
- information related to reporting systems and community engagement opportunities, and basic identification training to determine if an individual is at risk of or has been sex trafficked.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2023.

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: Washington is the sixth largest epicenter of sex trafficking in the United States, and more than 45 percent of all sex trafficking victims are minors who are in schools. Widespread, intersectional, accurate, and actionable sex trafficking education is a priceless component of future mitigation for this crime. The most vulnerable age for victims is between 12 and 18, which is roughly seventh to twelfth grade. Having this education in those grades can help save youth from harm. This education can be part of other existing courses. Providing this education in schools ensures that students

are educated in a non-judgmental safe space that is relatable for students.

OTHER: There is concern about unfunded mandates. While it may not take much to stand up these programs, we are unsure about what is really going to be required of schools.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Ria Bahadur, Author of SB 5355.

OTHER: Mike Hoover, Washington State School Directors' Association.

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