

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5398

As of February 9, 2023

Title: An act relating to domestic violence funding allocation.

Brief Description: Concerning domestic violence funding allocation.

Sponsors: Senators MacEwen and Wilson, L..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 2/09/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services award grants for domestic violence services, including shelter, based on the following allocation: 71 percent of funding is allocated evenly to contracted programs statewide, and the remaining 29 percent of funding is distributed proportionately based on bed capacity.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers state and federal funds for domestic violence programs, which includes shelters. A community-based domestic violence program is a nonprofit program or organization that provides, as its primary purpose, assistance and advocacy for domestic violence victims. Domestic violence assistance and advocacy includes: crisis intervention, individual and group support, information and referrals, and safety assessment and planning. Domestic violence assistance and advocacy may also include, but is not limited to:

- provision of shelter;
- emergency transportation;
- self-help services;

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- culturally specific services;
- legal advocacy;
- economic advocacy;
- community education;
- primary and secondary prevention efforts; and
- accompaniment and advocacy through medical, legal, immigration, human services, and financial assistance systems.

An emergency shelter is a place of supportive services and safe, temporary lodging offered on a 24-hour, seven-day per week basis to victims of domestic violence and their children.

DSHS awards grants on a contract basis to public or private nonprofit agencies, organizations, or individuals providing community-based domestic violence services, emergency shelter services, domestic violence hotline or information and referral services, and prevention efforts meeting minimum standards established by DSHS. Consideration as to need, geographic location, population ratios, the needs of specific underserved and cultural populations, and the extent of existing services is made in the award of grants.

In 2022, SB 5693 provided an appropriation of \$750,000 and directed that 71 percent of funding be allocated evenly to contracted programs statewide, and the remaining 29 percent of funding be distributed proportionately based on bed capacity. This funding allocation expires June 30, 2023.

Summary of Bill: The current funding allocation for DSHS grants for domestic violence services, including shelter, is codified. Seventy-one percent of funding is allocated evenly to contracted programs statewide, and the remaining 29 percent of funding is distributed proportionately based on bed capacity.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 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: The government made the formula for funding domestic violence shelters too complicated. There are counties that serve more people in a shelter than the shelter formula provides for, leaving rural shelters with less funding which is a problem because shelters serve families from different counties and even from out of state. Many people go to rural counties because they believe that their abuser is less likely to find them there. The people that feel the lack of funding the most are the clients. Changing the funding model will incentivize shelters to build more beds. Increased funding would allow for the hiring of more staff.

OTHER: Changing the formula now might not address the issue. The most feasible formula requires time and collaboration. Survivors rely on more than just housing assistance, they need things like legal assistance and food. This formula needs to be as equitable as possible. In it's bills current form, it's more likely to do more harm than good. There needs to be a work group of all relevant entities, but now is not the time to pass this bill. This bill might take money away from programs that already exist.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Drew MacEwen, Prime Sponsor; Gina Finley; Theresa camacho, Turning Pointe Survivor Advocacy Center; Shelly Willis, Family Education and Support Services Regional Resilience Center; Jill McKnight; Robert Wilson-Hoss, Turning Pointe; SUSAN CARDONA, Turning Pointe Survivor Advocacy Center.

OTHER: Karin White, YWCA Pierce County; Emily Stone, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

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