

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5398

As of February 21, 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, 2/14/23 [DPS].
Ways & Means: 2/21/23.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services Domestic Violence Services Program to convene a workgroup to review and update the formula used to determine the allocation of funding for domestic violence victim services agencies and provide a copy of the recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2023.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5398 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Member; Frame, Nguyen, Warnick and Wilson, J..

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Joshua Hinman (786-7281)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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;
- 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 above base funding, to be distributed proportionately based on bed capacity. This funding allocation expires June 30, 2023.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): DSHS's Domestic Violence Services Program is directed to convene a workgroup to review and update the formula used to determine the allocation of funding for domestic violence victim services agencies. The workgroup includes, but is not limited to, representatives from the following:

- DSHS;
- Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence;
- Department of Commerce Office of Crime Victims Advocacy;
- a minimum of nine DSHS contracted domestic violence victim services agencies—3 each from DSHS regions 1, 2, and 3, and representing both small and large capacity shelters; and
- 3 at-large community-based, or tribal domestic violence victim services providers, or both.

The workgroup is to develop formula allocation recommendations by December 1, 2023, and provide a copy of the recommendations to the Legislature.

DSHS has the final decision regarding implementing the formula allocation recommendations, and any recommendations implemented are effective July 1, 2024. DSHS may hire external consultants as needed.

The provisions of this Act expire August 1, 2024.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Directs the DSHS Domestic Violence Services Program to convene a workgroup to review and update the formula used to determine the allocation of funding for domestic violence victim services agencies.
- Assigns representatives to the workgroup.
- Tasks the workgroup to develop formula allocation recommendations by December 1, 2023, and provide a copy of the recommendations to the Legislature.
- Assigns DSHS the final decision regarding implementing the formula allocation recommendations, and any recommendations implemented are effective July 1, 2024.
- Allows DSHS to hire external consultants as needed.
- Expires the provisions of this Act, August 1, 2024.

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 (Human Services): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* 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 (Human Services): 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 (Human Services): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Turning Point is located in Mason County and operates one of the largest shelters, with a bed capacity of 56. The current funding allocation model penalizes rural providers. If the organization only served Mason County residents, this would not be problematic, however the organization receives referrals from all over the state. Turning Point is thankful for the extra funding last year and believes future funding should be tied to capacity, not zip code.

Testifier is grateful that domestic violence provider input is a component of the workgroup in this bill. Survivors rely on a variety of services and domestic violence programs are stretched so thin with funding constraints. We want the funding formula to be equitable to meet the needs of survivors.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Gina Finley; Emily Stone, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.