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## Community Safety Committee

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### HB 1736

**Brief Description:** Concerning procedures and requirements for reporting and investigating missing persons.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lekanoff, Springer, Ormsby, Parshley, Hill, Nance, Pollet and Ramel.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Shifts responsibility for obtaining the dental records of reported missing persons, and establishing and maintaining the statewide missing persons website, to the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit.

**Hearing Date:** 2/11/25

**Staff:** Corey Patton (786-7388).

#### Background:

##### Obtaining Dental Records for Missing Person Investigations.

When a person reported missing has not been found within 30 days of the report, or at any time criminal activity is suspected to be the basis of the person being missing, the sheriff, chief of police, county coroner or county medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority initiating and conducting the investigation for the missing person must ask the missing person's family or next of kin to give written consent to contact the missing person's dentist for the missing person's dental records, subject to certain exceptions where the investigating authority may contact the dentist without written consent. The dentist must provide the dental records to the investigating authority when presented with either:

- written consent from the missing person's family or next of kin; or

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- a statement from the investigating authority that the missing person's family or next of kin could not be located in the exercise of due diligence, or the family or next of kin refuse to consent to the release of the dental records and there is reason to believe that the family or next of kin may have been involved in the missing person's disappearance.

The missing person's dental records must be submitted as soon as possible to the Washington State Patrol (WSP) Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit.

#### Statewide Missing Persons Website.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) is required to establish and maintain a statewide missing persons website, which must:

- post relevant information concerning persons reported missing in the state;
- contain missing persons' names, physical descriptions, photographs, and other information that is deemed necessary according to adopted protocols; and
- allow citizens to more broadly disseminate information regarding missing persons for at least 30 days.

When funded, the WASPC must regularly transmit information contained within the website to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. The WSP is required to establish an interface with local law enforcement and the WASPC missing persons website, the toll-free 24-hour hotline, and national and other statewide missing persons systems or clearinghouses. Local law enforcement agencies must file an official missing persons report and enter biographical information into the state missing persons computerized network without delay after receiving notification of a missing person report.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

##### Obtaining Dental Records for Missing Person Investigations.

Responsibility for obtaining a missing person's dental records is shifted to the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit (WSP MUPU), rather than the sheriff, chief of police, county coroner or county medical examiner, or other law enforcement authority initiating and conducting the investigation for the missing person. The WSP MUPU must ask the missing person's family or next of kin to give written consent to contact the missing person's dentist for the missing person's dental records, subject to certain exceptions where the WSP MUPU may contact the dentist without written consent. The dentist must provide the dental records to the WSP MUPU when presented with either:

- written consent from the missing person's family or next of kin; or
- a statement from the investigating authority that the missing person's family or next of kin could not be located in the exercise of due diligence, the family or next of kin refuse to consent to the release of the dental records, or the next of kin is not able to sign a release due to circumstances that limit access and ability to obtain a signature.

##### Statewide Missing Persons Website.

Responsibility for establishing and maintaining the statewide missing persons website is shifted

to the WSP MUPU, rather than the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Subject to appropriation, the WSP MUPU must regularly transmit information contained on the website to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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