

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1736

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Community Safety

**Title:** An act relating to procedures and requirements for reporting and investigating missing persons.

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

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

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Safety: 2/11/25, 2/17/25 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute 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.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Simmons, Vice Chair; Graham, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Burnett, Davis, Farivar, Fosse and Obras.

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

**Background:**

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*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.*

### 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
- 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.

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### **Summary of Substitute 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 family or 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.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill requires a reported missing person's dentist to provide a copy of the missing person's dental records to the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit when presented with a statement from the investigating authority that the missing person's family or next of kin, rather than only the next of kin, is unable to sign a release due to circumstances that limit access and ability to obtain a signature.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on February 18, 2025.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The process of reporting missing persons involves interacting with several intermediaries, which may present barriers and challenges to grieving families. This bill is intended to increase the efficiency of collecting missing persons' dental records, and to relieve busy sheriffs and deputies of one of their many responsibilities so that they can focus on other tasks.

The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) has played an active role in maintaining the state's missing persons system for nearly 20 years. However, volunteering to transmit information to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons

System (NamUs) has proven to be a bigger undertaking than initially contemplated. Despite the WASPC's efforts to regularly transmit information about missing persons over the last five years, NamUs has been refusing to accept that information. This bill will require the Washington State Patrol to assume that responsibility instead.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Debra Lekanoff, prime sponsor; and James McMahan, WA Assoc Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.