
Community Safety Committee

SSB 5282

Brief Description: Reestablishing the advisory board for the missing and exploited children task force.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Frame, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Riccelli, Saldaña, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C.).

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishes an Advisory Board to the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force.
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Hearing Date: 3/17/25

Staff: Michelle Rusk (786-7153).

Background:

Missing and Exploited Children Task Force.

In 1999 the Teekah Lewis Act was enacted, which created the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force (MECTF). The MECTF is a multi-agency task force under the direction of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), focused on identifying and arresting individuals who exploit children. Specifically, the MECTF is authorized to assist law enforcement agencies upon request in cases involving missing or exploited children by:

- directing assistance and case management;
- providing technical assistance;
- providing personnel training;
- making referrals for assistance from local, state, national, and international agencies; and
- coordinating and sharing information among local, state, interstate, and federal law enforcement and social services agencies.

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.

Advisory Board to the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force.

In 1999 an Advisory Board for the MECTF (Board) was also established. The six-member Board advised the Chief of the WSP on the objectives, conduct, management, and coordination of the various activities of the MECTF.

Five members of the Board were appointed by the WSP Chief, which included a county prosecuting attorney, a municipal police chief, a county sheriff, a representative of the WSP, and one person representing parents of missing or exploited children. The sixth member was appointed by the Attorney General. Board members served two-year terms. In 2016 the Legislature terminated the Board.

Summary of Bill:

The Advisory Board on Missing and Exploited Children (Board) is established to advise the Chief of the WSP on the objectives, conduct, management, and coordination of the various activities of the MECTF. The WSP Chief must appoint seven members of the Board, including:

- a county prosecuting attorney;
- a municipal police chief or a county sheriff;
- a representative of the WSP;
- a defense attorney;
- a member of a federally recognized tribe;
- a certified sex offender treatment provider; and
- a person with lived experience of child abduction or child exploitation.

One member must represent and be appointed by the Attorney General.

The Board must meet at least annually and submit an annual report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature beginning December 1, 2026. The report must include:

- details regarding reactive sting operations and proactive sting operations conducted by the MECTF;
- assessments of the objective, conduct, achievements, and performance outcomes of the MECTF; and
- recommendations to better achieve the objectives of the MECTF.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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