

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5282

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

**Title:** An act relating to reestablishing the advisory board for the missing and exploited children task force.

**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.).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Safety: 3/17/25, 3/31/25 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by Committee)**

- Establishes an Advisory Board to the Missing and Exploited Children Task Force.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Simmons, Vice Chair; Davis, Farivar, Fosse and Obras.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Graham, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Burnett.

**Staff:** Michelle Rusk (786-7153).

**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.*

### 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 multiagency 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.

### 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.

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### **Summary of Amended 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.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill:

- adds a statement of intent for the Advisory Board on Missing and Exploited Children (Board);
- clarifies who is qualified for the Board position reserved for a person with direct lived experience of child abduction or child exploitation; and
- expands what information the Board must include in its annual report to the Legislature for people arrested as a result of reactive and proactive sting operations.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended 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) This bill will recommission an advisory board first formed in 1999 but terminated in 2016, which was originally formed to advise the WSP Chief on the objectives, conduct, management, and coordination of the Missing and Exploited Children Taskforce (taskforce). After sunseting the original advisory board in 2016, the taskforce shifted into controversial net nanny schemes, which have been found not to deter or prevent crime. An advisory board will help make sure net nanny operations result in arresting people actually interested in harming children, and not adults on adult websites.

The internet can be a horribly dangerous space for children, and data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows most child exploitation happens on social media and gaming platforms, not on 18 and older dating sites. No reports identify Craigslist as a source of child exploitation. This bill does not change the function of any criminal statute, and individuals can and should still be prosecuted for enticing children online, including if law enforcement makes up a minor child as part of a sting operation. However, the need for this bill arises from the reality that law enforcement know would-be predators congregate online in places where children go, and while these stings have been traditionally run on adult dating sites, that is not where law enforcement priorities should lie.

The advisory board will also help ensure constitutional protections for citizens. Liberty interests and safety interests can and should coexist. From the first net nanny operations, officers have ignored their training, disregarded entrapment law, and no children have been rescued, with folks wrongfully convicted and actual predators free to continue preying on children. No government agency should go without oversight. Board oversight and reporting is particularly critical at this time of constraint budget. Increased legislative oversight will ensure proper training and resources to prevent crimes and harm to children. We need to get real child predators off the street.

(Opposed) This bill is intended to curtail net nanny stings, and curtailing those stings does not help protect children. Over and over again, there is concern that state law enforcement officers are reaching out and enticing people as part of a sting. But recipients of this kind of outreach have the ability to block these communications. If someone asks if you want to have a sexual relationship with a minor, you should report that and block that person, and not communicate with them directly.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Lisa Wellman, prime sponsor; Matthew Perry, Jewish Prisoner Services International; Bruce Glant; Heather Kelly, League of Women Voters of Washington; Mick Woynarowski, Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (WACDL); and Colin Wood, CAGE.

(Opposed) Gabriel Jacobs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** Emily Gause, WACDL and WDA.