SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5342

As of January 28, 2025

Title: An act relating to providing access for legislators to facilities owned and operated by the state.

Brief Description: Providing access for legislators to facilities owned and operated by the state.

Sponsors: Senators Christian and Frame.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Human Services: 1/28/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections; the Department of Children, Youth, and Families; and the Department of Social and Health Services, to provide access to a facility or institution upon request of an elected member of the Legislature within 48 hours.
- Limits the request for access to only facilities owned and operated by the respective agency and does not include any facilities operated in contract with the agency.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Will Trondsen (786-7552)

Background: The Washington State Legislature is comprised of 98 members of the House of Representatives and 49 members of the Senate.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) operates and manages 11 adult correctional facilities—nine are specifically for males and two for females. DOC also operates reentry centers.

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.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) operates two secure residential facilities: The Green Hill School in Chehalis which serves older male juveniles, and The Echo Glen Children's Center in Snoqualmie which serves younger males and female juveniles. DCYF also operates community facilities.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Behavioral Health Administration operates three psychiatric state hospitals: Western State Hospital, Eastern State Hospital, and the Child and Study Treatment Center. DSHS also operates the Special Commitment Center, which is a total confinement facility on McNeil Island that provides specialized mental health treatment for civilly committed sex offenders that have completed their prison sentences. DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration also operates four facilities: Fircrest School in Shoreline, Rainier School in Buckley, Lakeland Village in Medical Lake, and Yakima Valley School in Selah.

Summary of Bill: DOC, DCYF, and DSHS are required to provide access to elected members of the Legislature to the premises of any facility or institution owned and operated, when requested. Access must be afforded by the respective agency within 48 hours of receipt of the legislative member's request. The request shall not be limited to business days.

Access includes and is not limited to tours of the facility or to meet with a constituent in the facility's custody.

When a member requests access to a facility or institution beyond 48 hours from the date of the request, the agency must provide a response within 48 hours of receipt of that request. If an agency fails to comply with the timing requirements, it shall respond to the member of the Legislature with the reason for the delay and a plan to facilitate the access request. All requests must be submitted in writing to the Legislative Affairs Office for the respective agency unless otherwise designated by the secretary of that agency.

The requirements for access do not apply to facilities owned and operated by local governments or under contract with the respective agency.

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: PRO: Legislators need to see first hand the conditions of the facilities. This bill makes sure that elected members have the tools to go

into these facilities and do their job. Legislators need to have access to the institutions when people let them know that there is a problem and they need to be able to see it in-person. There is an appreciation that some variables that may require additional time for these institutions, and each institution has a different way in how they handle the requests. It is imperative for citizens that elected members be able to go into any institution at any point for accountability purposes.

OTHER: The DOC supports providing access to legislative members. The current policy allows for two weeks notice and allows the staff to work through any issues to make sure it is safe for all. This bill currently requires 24 hour access, 7 days a week, within a 48-hour period. There would be a need for additional staff to implement this legislation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Leonard Christian, Prime Sponsor; Raymond Williams, Just Us Solutions ; Jacob Schmitt, Just Us Solutions, LLC.

OTHER: Jason Bennett, Department of Corrections.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.