

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5506

As of February 4, 2025

Title: An act relating to extending the effective date of licensing living accommodations for residential private schools.

Brief Description: Extending the effective date of licensing living accommodations for residential private schools.

Sponsors: Senators Christian, Wilson, C., Nobles and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 2/04/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, starting July 1, 2026, to license living accommodations of residential private schools, unless exempted, as well as engage in negotiated rulemaking with the state Board of Education and other affected interests.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Starting January 1, 2024, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) began to investigate referrals of alleged child abuse or neglect occurring at residential private schools. Any facilities where DCYF is investigating child abuse or neglect must share records and any other information relevant to DCYF's investigation. Any records or information shared with DCYF retains any otherwise existing confidentiality protections under state or federal law.

DCYF must send a copy of the investigation report, including the finding, regarding any incidents of alleged child abuse or neglect to the agency administration of the facility in

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which the incident occurred and to the state agency which provides licensure, oversight, or accreditation to the program at the facility in which the incident occurred.

Starting July 1, 2025, living accommodations provided by residential private schools must be licensed by DCYF, unless they are exempted. Accommodations include all areas and school operations intended to allow students who are enrolled in the school's program of basic education to eat, sleep, bathe, recreate, or otherwise reside. DCYF is to adopt minimum health and safety rules, in consultation with the state Board of Education (SBE). Rules are to address the needs of children and youth during noninstructional hours, including but not limited to space allotted to each child or youth for sleeping, developmentally appropriate privacy requirements, personal storage, nutritional needs, cleanliness and hygiene of living quarters, social-emotional well-being during noninstructional hours, health and wellness accommodations, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and physical safety.

Residential private schools are exempt from DCYF's licensing requirements if SBE determines that the school is accredited through a body approved by SBE, and that accreditation covers student living accommodations comparable to DCYF's licensing requirements, in consultation with DCYF.

DCYF is to engage in negotiated rule making with the SBE and other affected interests to adopt minimum health and safety rules to implement the licensing requirements of this bill.

The definition of agency includes residential private schools and does not include nonresidential schools. Residential private school means a nonpublic school or nonpublic school district, subject to approval by the SBE, that provides sleeping and living facilities or residential accommodations for enrolled students.

Summary of Bill: Starting July 1, 2026, DCYF is to license living accommodations of residential private schools, unless exempted, as well as engage in negotiated rulemaking with the SBE and other affected interests.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The interested parties have been working together and negotiated rule-making is done. This bill ensures that the timelines provided works for everyone involved so everyone impacted can be in compliance with this new law.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Leonard Christian, Prime Sponsor; Suzie Hanson, Washington Federation of Independent Schools.

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