

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1608

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to children's services.

Brief Description: Improving services for children.

Sponsor(s): By House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Leonard, Winsley, Rasmussen, Beck, Anderson, Hargrove, Brekke, Bowman, Dorn, Hine, Rust, Riley, Spanel, H. Myers, Dellwo, Phillips, Haugen, Jacobsen, Jones, R. King, Pruitt, Basich, R. Johnson, Van Luven, Holland, Valle, Paris, Belcher, Sheldon and O'Brien).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, February 28, 1991, DPS;
Appropriations, March 9, 1991, DPS(HS)-A;
Passed House, March 14, 1991, 94-3;
Amended by Senate.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1608 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 6 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Riley, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Brekke, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; R. King; and H. Myers.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 4 members: Representatives Winsley, Ranking Minority Member; Tate, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beck; and Hochstatter.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill by Committee on Human Services by substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Appropriations do pass.* Signed by 29 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Inslee, Vice Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Morton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Belcher; Bowman; Braddock; Brekke; Dorn; Ebersole; Ferguson; Fuhrman;

Hine; Lisk; May; McLean; Mielke; Nealey; Peery; Pruitt;
Rust; H. Sommers; Sprenkle; Valle; Vance; Wang; and
Wineberry.

Staff: Wayne Kawakami (786-7384).

Background: Group home beds for children have declined dramatically over the past 10 years. The decline in group home beds occurred at a time of increasing child abuse and neglect and increasing alcohol and drug abuse by children. The result is children who require a structured environment provided by group homes being served in family foster care, or programs intended for runaways or children from families experiencing a family conflict which could be resolved through family counseling and short-term residential programs. Consequently, children requiring group home care have not received it, children and families requiring assistance in resolving family conflicts have not received it, and foster parents have been forced to serve children who are not appropriate for foster home care. Increasing numbers of children are involved in destructive lifestyles of drug and street gang activity. Services for juvenile offenders to provide constructive alternatives to drugs and gang involvement are lacking.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to assess a representative sample of children in its care to determine the appropriate level of residential and treatment services needed. The department will recommend the reallocation of children's services funding to appropriate legislative committees by December 1, 1992. Statutory staffing requirements for short-term residential facilities serving runaways and children from families experiencing family conflicts are removed. These short-term facilities may not be licensed to house dependent children requiring foster care or group care. The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to establish a contracted three-step treatment program for juvenile offenders. The program will be culturally relevant and appropriate and will provide institutional, community residential, and transitional services for selected juvenile offenders. The department may also establish a therapeutic family home program for up to 15 dependent youth who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): The statutory staffing ratios for Crisis Residential Centers for runaways and for dependent children will continue. A formal complaint resolution process involving administrative law judges with appeal to the superior court is established. Transitional living programs for dependent children are authorized. Foster parents will receive written notice five days prior

to the removal of a foster child in their care except under very limited circumstances. The Department of Social and Health Services is required to develop criteria for foster-adopt parents. Foster parents may file motions to intervene in actions relating to their foster child if the child has lived in the foster home at least 18 months.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Human Services) The reduction in group homes for children is resulting in the inappropriate use of Crisis Residential Centers and other services for runaways and families in conflict. The Department of Social and Health Services is placing children in CRCs, who do not belong there and keeping them there longer than the law allows. Additional resources are needed to improve services to dependent children and runaways and families in conflict.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) Passage is urged to help provide a full continuum of care for children in need.

Testimony Against: (Human Services) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Witnesses: (Human Services) Yvonne Chase and William Quick, Department of Social and Health Services; Margaret Casey, Children's Alliance; Charles Shelan, Community Youth Services; Tom Rembeisa and Sheila Smith, Ruth Dykeman Center; Sharon Osborne, Children's Home Society; Monica Walters, Excelsior Children's Services; Steve Walters, Toutle River Boys Ranch; Eileen Harrington, Denny Place Youth Shelter; and Peter Berliner, Children's Alliance.

Witnesses: (Appropriations) Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

VOTE ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Yeas 94; Nays 3; Excused 1

Nays: Representatives Fuhrman, Morton, Padden

Excused: Representative Phillips