

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2734

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE, FEBRUARY 21, 1992

Brief Description: Establishing the office of crime victims' advocacy.

SPONSORS: House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Appelwick, Padden, H. Myers, Brough, Basich, R. King, Jacobsen, Riley, Ludwig, Paris, Wineberry, Nelson, Franklin, Wang, Horn, Cooper, Jones, Pruitt, May, Wynne, Mitchell, Ogden, Roland, J. Kohl, Haugen, O'Brien, Spanel, Rasmussen and Anderson; by request of Department of Community Development and Dept. of Social and Health Services)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Nelson, Chairman; Hayner, M. Kreidler, Madsen, Newhouse, Rasmussen, and A. Smith.

Staff: Susan Carlson (786-7418)

Hearing Dates: February 20, 1992; February 21, 1992

BACKGROUND:

In 1990, through the Community Protection Act, the Legislature recognized the need to increase services for victims of sexual assault. Subsequently, the Governor issued an Executive Order which created the Office of Crime Victims' Advocacy within the Department of Community Development. The order specified that the office was to work with community organizations and governments to compile information regarding state policies, practices, and priorities relative to sexual assault services. Although this Executive Order expired on June 30, 1991, some of the tasks assigned to the office by the order have not been completed.

Discussions with community providers and victims throughout the state indicate that the demand on service providers and the need for additional resources is not exclusive to victims of sexual assault. It is recommended that the Office of Crime Victims' Advocacy be statutorily authorized within the Department of Community Development to address the needs and concerns of all victims of crime.

SUMMARY:

The Office of Crime Victims' Advocacy is established within the Department of Community Development to provide a focus within state government on the rights of and services for victims of crime.

The role of the office includes: advocating for victims' rights and services; serving as a clearinghouse of information; providing leadership in the development of public policy; facilitating the development of service standards; and planning and providing training.

The crime victims' ombuds is created within the Office to ensure statewide compliance with the statutory rights of crime victims. Assistance may be in the form of investigation, information, referral, acting as a liaison, or other interventions. Procedures for resolution of victim's complaints are provided.

Records maintained by the office are not subject to discovery in any judicial proceeding except upon written motion and in camera review by the court. Records related to the ombuds functions of the office are not available to the public if disclosure could reveal the identity of a crime victim or complainant.

An executive administrator of the Office of Crime Victims' Advocacy must be appointed and must report to the director of the Department of Community Development. The grant program administered by the department is broadened to include programs for the prevention of sexual assault victimization.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR: None

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: No one