

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2766

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
Human Services

**Title:** An act relating to children.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating authority of law enforcement officers to release runaway children to other responsible adults.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lemmon, Conway, Morris, Cooke, Orr, Patterson, Long, Kessler, Thibaudeau, Linville, Moak, Rayburn, Karahalios and Johanson.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Human Services, February 3, 1994, DPS.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Cooke, Ranking Minority Member; Talcott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brown; Caver; Karahalios; Lisk; Padden and Patterson.

**Staff:** Dave Knutson (786-7146).

**Background:** When a child runs away from home, law enforcement officers are required by statute to pick up the child and either return the child home, take the child to a crisis residential center, or take the child to the home of a responsible adult. Law enforcement officers have a difficult time returning children home when they are illegally harbored by adults.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Law enforcement officers will pick up runaways and either return them to their parent or guardian, take them to a crisis residential center or take them to a responsible adult after parental notification.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** Responsible adults will be able to receive runaways after parent notification. Law enforcement officers will remove a child from an adult illegally harboring the child and return the child home. The crime of illegally harboring a child is

increased from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor. The department will maintain a toll free hotline to assist parents of runaways. The criminal justice training commission will ensure law enforcement agencies will accurately describe juvenile runaway statutes.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Law enforcement officers need clearer direction on when to pick up runaways and where to take them. Penalties for illegally harboring a minor are increased.

**Testimony Against:** Law enforcement officers should not return runaways home if the runaway does not want to return home.

**Witnesses:** Liz Dalton, Department of Social and Health Services (con); Denise Dickinson (pro); Margaret Casey, Washington State Catholic Conference (con); and Greg Gooch, Toughlove Northwest (pro).