

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2588

As Reported By House Committee On:

Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to controlled substances as a risk factor in determining negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child.

Brief Description: Regarding controlled substances as a risk factor in determining negligent treatment of a child.

Sponsors: Representatives Boldt, Mielke, Mulliken, Carrell, Lambert and Clements.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/29/98, 1/30/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Boldt, Vice Chairman; Bush, Vice Chairman; Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Kastama, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes; Carrell; Dickerson; Gombosky; McDonald and Wolfe.

Staff: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background: The negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child is an act or omission that constitutes a clear and present danger to the child's health, welfare, and safety. The Department of Social and Health services (DSHS) uses various indicia of harm to judge the seriousness of reports of neglect. These indicia are called risk factors. Currently, abuse of drugs or alcohol, by themselves, are not considered as risk factors.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Substance abuse is added as a risk factor in determining negligent treatment or maltreatment.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill uses substance abuse as a risk factor instead of "the illegal use or possession of controlled substances".

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Children living in homes headed by severe substance abusers fall through the cracks of the child abuse and neglect laws. These children suffer from chronic neglect, but do not fit any of the Child Protection Services (CPS) risk factors sufficiently to warrant CPS action. Personal accounts reveal that the necessities of life are provided in these homes, but that the children in the homes are left to fend for themselves. These children may miss substantial school time, have lice, and be exposed to old syringes. However, these facts do not create a situation that calls for a response by CPS under the current risk factor matrix.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Helen Myrick, Pierce County Community Network (pro); Betty Beere, Pierce County Community Network (pro); Cortney Anderson, Pierce County Community Network (pro); and Jennifer Strus, Director, Division of Program and Policy, DSHS (neutral).