

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1990

Title: *An act relating to the definition of child abuse.*

Brief Description: *Revising the definition of child abuse to include temporary abandonment.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Doumit, Tokuda, H. Sommers, Sullivan, Clements, Keiser, Hatfield, Blalock, Benson, Skinner, O'Brien, Cooke and Anderson.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Meeting Date: *February 25, 1997.*

Bill Analysis Prepared by: *Doug Ruth (786-7134).*

Background: *Washington does not have a specific statute regarding young children who are left alone for extended periods of time. If a child is permanently abandoned, the state may charge the person with family abandonment under chapter 26.20 RCW. This crime requires that the person intended to abandon the child. For cases where intent to abandon does not exist, the state may act only if the person's action falls within the definition of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect is defined as:*

The injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child, adult dependent, or developmentally disabled person by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's or adult's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. An abused child is a child who has been subjected to child abuse or neglect as defined herein.–

The definition of negligent treatment or maltreatment is:

an act or omission which evidences a serious disregard of consequences of such magnitude as to constitute a clear and present danger to the child's health, welfare, and safety.–

Summary of Bill: *Acts of temporary abandonment– are added to the definition of child abuse and neglect. Temporary abandonment– is defined as recklessly leaving a child under the age of ten years unattended in or at any place for such period of time as may be substantially likely to endanger the health, welfare, or safety of the child.–*

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *None requested.*

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