

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6557

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 5, 1998
Ways & Means, February 10, 1998

Title: An act relating to reporting and obtaining information related to licensed child day-care centers and family day-care providers through a toll-free telephone number.

Brief Description: Establishing a toll-free telephone number for information on child day-care providers.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Long, Brown, Patterson, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Rasmussen and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/29/98, 2/5/98 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/10/98 [DPS (HSC)].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6557 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Long, Chair; Zarelli, Vice Chair; Franklin, Hargrove, Kohl and Stevens.

Staff: Joan K. Mell (786-7447)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6557 as recommended by Committee on Human Services & Corrections be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Kohl, Long, Loveland, McDonald, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau and Winsley.

Staff: Karen Barrett (786-7711)

Background: Citizens have expressed concern that parents are unable to contact one source to find information about child day-care facilities.

Day-care centers and family day-care providers must be licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The Licensing Division of DSHS provides information about a day care's license. The Division of Children and Family Services processes complaints of abuse or neglect in day care facilities. But the public cannot call one phone number to inquire about licenses or make complaints.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DSHS establishes and maintains a toll-free number for communication of information related to child and family day care. Callers can find out the following information: (a) determine whether a day care is licensed; (b) determine whether a day care is in good standing regarding licensing requirements; (c) obtain information on how to report suspected or observed noncompliance with licensing requirements; (d) obtain information on how to report alleged abuse or neglect in day care; (e) obtain information on how to report health, safety, and welfare concerns in day care; (f) receive followup assistance, including information on the office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman; and (g) receive referral information on other agencies or entities that may be of further assistance to the caller.

DSHS must investigate complaints pursuant to its own internal protocol and refer callers to appropriate agencies for assistance.

DSHS must give the phone number to parents and post the phone number at all child and family day-care centers. Further, the number must be published in reasonably available printed and electronic media.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Instead of reporting complaints of abuse and neglect, licensing, and other health concerns directly to the toll-free line, the toll-free line would provide information to the caller on how to report complaints. Callers may be transferred or referred to an appropriate agency to process their complaints. Callers need to be advised of the Family and Children's Ombudsman. The number needs to be published in a manner that would be readily accessible to the public.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Parents have a very difficult time finding an appropriate telephone number to call to report complaints and find out information regarding day care centers. There is no published telephone number for parents to contact to find out meaningful information about day care.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Kristine Mohn, Stu Jacobson, Washington Parents for Safe Daycare; Charlotte Dedman, Child Care Action Council.