

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6716

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

Title: An act relating to background checks for persons being authorized to care for children.

Brief Description: Requiring additional background checking for persons caring for children.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Long, Winsley, Kline, Prentice and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/3/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6716 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Fara Daun (786-7459)

Background: Under current law, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must perform background checks through the Washington State Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and cannot rely on an equivalent FBI check from another government agency. In some cases this means that DSHS is duplicating very recent national conviction records checks performed by other agencies, states, or the military.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DSHS may accept a recent FBI conviction records check requested by another government agency or military branch. A recent check is a check that is less than one year old.

DSHS may, within existing funds, pay for the background check expense for low-income family day care homes.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill does not authorize DSHS to access nonconviction data and restores DSHS payments for foster family home background checks to that under current law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1998.

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

Testimony For: Nonconviction data is needed to accurately assess the provider's suitability to care for children. The department currently pays for background checks for foster family homes. The department frequently must duplicate recent national background checks done on people moving from other states or in the military. These are equivalent or superior to our checks.

Testimony Against: The bill makes payment for foster family care background checks discretionary. This poses a hardship for many. The department should also pay for low-income family day care on the same basis.

Testified: Senator Jeanne Kohl, prime sponsor (pro); Jennifer Strus, DSHS (pro); Terry Kohl (concerns).