

5511-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Zarelli, Haugen, Benton, Strannigan, Rasmussen, Hochstatter, Schow and Goings)

Brief Title: Modifying provisions relating to retention of reports of child abuse or neglect.

**SB 5511-S - DIGEST**

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Provides that, to protect the privacy in reporting and the maintenance of reports of nonaccidental injury, neglect, death, sexual abuse, and cruelty to children by their parents, and to safeguard against arbitrary, malicious, or erroneous information or actions, the department shall not maintain information determined to be unfounded for longer than six years except as provided in the act.

Provides that, at the end of six years from receipt of the unfounded report, the information shall be purged unless an additional report has been received in the intervening period.

Declares that "unfounded" means available evidence indicates that, more likely than not, child abuse or neglect did not occur.

Provides that the department shall notify the alleged perpetrator of the allegations of child abuse and neglect at the earliest possible point in the investigation that will not jeopardize the safety and protection of the child or the investigation process.

Whenever the department completes an investigation of a child abuse or neglect report under chapter 26.44 RCW, the department shall notify the alleged perpetrator of the report and the department's investigative findings.

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5511-S

May 7, 1997

To the Honorable President and Members,  
The Senate of the State of Washington  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 3, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5511 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to child abuse and neglect information;"

Section 3 of SSB 5511 would have required the Department of Social and Health Services to report annually to the legislature on the number of reports of child abuse or neglect determined to be unfounded, and the percentage of unfounded reports compared to the total number of reports received by the Department, and the number of files or reports from which unfounded information was purged.

As part of my quality improvement efforts, I have undertaken to review our statutes for all reporting requirements and to rid state government of unnecessary reports and paperwork. It would be contrary to that effort to pass into law yet another unnecessary

report.

For this reason, I have vetoed section 3 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 5511.

With the exception of section 3, I am approving Substitute Senate Bill No. 5511.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Locke  
Governor