

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1866

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to shelter care.

Brief Description: Changing shelter care provisions to favor placing a child with a relative.

Sponsors: Representatives McMorris, Tokuda, Boldt, Sump, D. Sommers and Campbell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/18/99, 2/24/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- The Department must attempt to place a child in shelter care with a relative.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Boldt, Republican Vice Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Campbell; Carrell; Dickerson; Eickmeyer; Kastama and Pflug.

Staff: Marilee Scarbrough (786-7196).

Background:

Current law provides that a child taken into custody pursuant to a court order because the child's health, safety or welfare is endangered, or because of a report of abuse or neglect must be placed in shelter care. Shelter care is defined as temporary physical care in a licensed facility or in a home not required to be licensed. The current statute also provides that children can not be held longer than 72 hours, unless

directed to do so by court order. The statute does not contain specific provisions encouraging the department to place the child with a relative.

Summary of Bill:

This bill requires the department to attempt to place a child taken into custody with a relative. The child must be comfortable with the relative and the relative must be willing to take the child. Placement with a relative is not required if the safety or welfare of the child would be jeopardized or if placement would hinder efforts to reunite the parent and child. The department must document its efforts to place the child with a relative.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This issue was raised by a grandparent of a child placed in shelter care. The department supports the recommendation. Relative placements should be made as soon as possible. We support the concept of placing the child consistent with federal law. The department still needs to assess the suitability of the relative, often this must be done within a short time period. The department is still determining whether there is a fiscal impact.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Cathy McMorris , prime sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; and Carole Holland, Department of Social and Health Services.