

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1179

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to emergency management and school violence plans for schools.

Brief Description: Enacting the school violence reduction and emergency preparedness act.

Sponsors: Representatives Kastama, McDonald, Cooper, Reardon, Quall, Miloscia, Morris, Rockefeller, Stensen, Kenney, Edmonds, Fisher, Scott, Dickerson, Tokuda, Haigh, Santos, Cody, Conway, Keiser, Gombosky, Sullivan, Lovick, Kagi, Hurst, Kessler, Poulsen, O'Brien, Murray, Wolfe, Ogden, Wood, Regala, McIntire and Lantz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/25/99, 2/8/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Public and private schools are encouraged to do emergency management plans that consider violent acts in addition to natural disasters.
- Emergency management agencies are to help schools prepare emergency management plans.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke and Stensen.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox and Wensman.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background:

The State Board of Education, as directed by statute, has issued rules requiring local school boards and governing bodies of private schools to develop and practice plans to evacuate school buildings in case of a sudden emergency. These plans are to be taught periodically to all school personnel and practiced as frequently as may be necessary.

Under current law, the state Military Department is responsible for comprehensive emergency management. This entails the preparation and implementation of all civilian emergency functions, including responding to disasters.

Summary of Bill:

School districts, public schools, and private schools are encouraged to develop and adopt an emergency management plan to prepare for, respond to, and recover from human-caused emergencies related to acts or threats of violence, or an all-hazard emergency management plan covering natural, technological and human-caused emergencies and disasters, including acts of violence. The plan should: (1) identify potential hazards to the school, students, and staff; (2) describe measures taken to protect the school, students, and staff; and (3) describe steps to be taken in the event of an emergency to ensure all primary emergency functions are fulfilled.

Schools are encouraged to develop an education program to inform students, parents, volunteers, and staff about its emergency management plan. The plan should be practiced annually.

The Emergency Management Division of the Military Department, cooperating with local emergency management agencies, must develop and provide to schools an all-hazard planning guide for school districts, public schools, and private schools. School districts are encouraged to coordinate plans among the schools in that district, and to work with local emergency management, law enforcement, and fire agencies. Private schools are also encouraged to work with local agencies in developing the schools' emergency management plan. Schools are encouraged to develop their plans within three years.

Money is to be appropriated to local emergency management agencies through the Emergency Management Division of the Military Department to assist public schools, school districts, and private schools develop their emergency management plan. The funding is to provide one full-time equivalent employee (FTE) for local emergency management agencies in counties with K-12 enrollment of 100,000 to 200,000; two FTEs for counties with over 200,000 K-12 enrollment; and six FTEs in the Emergency Management Division for all other counties.

School districts that develop emergency management plans must report on their efforts to the Emergency Management Division by December 31, 2001, and every third year thereafter. The Emergency Management Division is to report to the education committees of the Legislature by February 15, 2002, and every third year thereafter.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 1999.

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

Testimony For: The violence-related tragedies that occurred in schools in the past few years underscore the need for more planning to prevent and address such tragedies. Students do not feel safe in school, which adversely affects their learning environment. Current programs on crisis plans in schools only contemplate natural disasters. Schools need plans and training to deal with violent acts. Emergency management agencies at the state and local level can assist schools in preparing and implementing those plans.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Kastama, prime sponsor; Eric Holdeman, Washington State Emergency Management Association; Susan Paulson, Stanwood High School; Martin Mueller, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Judy Hartmann, Tacoma Public Schools.