

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1493

Title: An act relating to homeless children and their families; amending RCW 43.63A.650, 74.13.020, and 74.13.031; adding new sections to chapter 43.63A RCW; creating a new section; and declaring an emergency.

Brief Description: Establishing a collaborative effort to address the housing needs of homeless children and their families.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Edwards, Lovick, Veloria, O'Brien, Barlean, Ogden, Conway, Schual-Berke, Murray, Dickerson, Kenney, Regala, Cooper, Stensen, Cody, Anderson, Santos, Rockefeller, Kagi, Edmonds, Lantz and Wood.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Meeting Date: February 4, 1999.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Dave Knutson, Counsel (786-7146)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services was sued by the Washington Coalition for the Homeless over the Department's role in delivering services to homeless children and their families. In December, 1997 the Washington Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff and determined, based on language in the state child welfare statute, that the Department had a responsibility to devise and implement a coordinated and comprehensive plan for the care and protection of homeless children and their families. The Court's ruling only applied to homeless children and their families, not to a broader population of homeless children without parental care or support. The Court also ruled that juvenile court judges have the authority to order the Department to offer housing assistance to a child's family when homelessness is the primary reason for placing a child in foster care or continuing a placement.

The Governor directed the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and the Department of Social and Health Services to jointly develop the coordinated and comprehensive plan required by the Supreme Court's ruling. The plan will be submitted to the King County Superior Court five weeks after the end of the 1999 legislative session.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) will be the principal state department responsible for providing shelter and housing assistance to homeless children and their families. The Department will develop, administer, supervise, and monitor a coordinated and comprehensive plan to serve

homeless children and their families. The DCTED will develop the plan collaboratively with the Department of Social and Health Services. The plan will be operated within the funding level established by the Legislature in the operating and capital budgets. The DCTED will establish a data collection system to collect and analyze the extent and nature of homelessness in Washington.

The DCTED will also establish program standards and eligibility criteria for services available through emergency housing programs and other benefits as may be available to homeless children and their families.

The duty of the Department of Social and Health Services to provide services to homeless children and their families will be defined in, and limited by, the coordinated and comprehensive plan developed under the leadership of DCTED and by the appropriation provided by the legislature to implement the plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 1999.

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