

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1866

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, April 1, 1999

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: Human Services & Corrections: 3/18/99, 4/1/99 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Patterson, Sheahan, Stevens and Zarelli.

Staff: Lynn Hale (786-7430)

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 cannot be held longer than 72 hours, unless directed to do so by court order. The statute does not contain specific provisions encouraging the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to place the child with a relative.

Summary of Bill: DSHS must 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: Relatives are concerned with the placement of children in shelter care. The department supports the recommendation of placing children with relatives. Relative placements should be made as soon as possible.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative McMorris, prime sponsor; PRO: Edith Owen, Coordinator of Relatives Raising Children in Pierce County; Vivian Weers, John Weers, Rita Brown, United Grandparents Raising Grandchildren; Carole Holland, Children’s Administration; Laurie Lippold, Children’s Home Society.