

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5462

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, February 18, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to the provision of services to the homeless.

**Brief Description:** Providing services to the homeless.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hargrove, Wojahn, Deccio, Loveland, Winsley, Snyder, Spanel, Oke, McAuliffe, Gardner, Bauer and Patterson; by request of Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and Department of Social and Health Services.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 2/5/99, 2/18/99 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5462 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill 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:** The Legislature recognizes that homelessness is a significant problem in Washington. Concern exists that children might be placed into the foster care system when homelessness is the primary reason for placement or the continuation of placement. It has been suggested that the Legislature should ensure that children are not placed into foster care simply because their family is homeless. The Washington State Supreme Court in Coalition for the Homeless v. DSHS stated that the Department of Social and Health Services has an enforceable statutory duty to provide housing assistance to homeless children and their families and to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated plan for providing services to homeless children. Planning for and serving the shelter and housing needs of the homeless has been and continues to be a responsibility of the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development continues to be responsible for planning for and serving the shelter and housing needs of the homeless. To effectively address the needs of homeless families with children, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development collaborates with the Department of Social and Health Services and other agencies to provide necessary services. Children should not be placed in the foster care system if homelessness is the primary reason for placement.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The substitute bill contains only the intent section; everything else was stricken from the bill.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 26, 1999.

**Effective Date:** This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** The Department of Social and Health Services feels that this bill will provide the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development clearly defined roles and responsibilities for caring for homeless children and their families.

**Testimony Against:** Opponents of this bill feel that the bill overturns the Washington State Supreme Court ruling in *Coalition for the Homeless v. DSHS*, and allows DSHS to escape responsibility for providing services to homeless children and their families. The opponents feel that the bill does not clearly state that the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development has an obligation to provide services to homeless families.

**Testified:** PRO: Tim Douglas, Director Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; Lyle Quasim, Secretary Department of Social and Health Services; CON: Seth Dawson, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless; Corky Senecal, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless; Phoebe Nelson, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.