

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6361

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 1, 2000
Ways & Means, February 7, 2000

Title: An act relating to child abuse and neglect reporting, investigation, and training procedures and the administration of the Washington state schools for the blind and for the deaf.

Brief Description: Protecting children at the state school for the deaf and the state school for the blind from abuse and neglect.

Sponsors: Senators Zarelli, Hargrove, Hale, Honeyford, McCaslin, Hochstatter, Swecker, Johnson, Roach, Stevens, Oke, Benton and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/27/2000, 2/1/2000 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/7/2000 [DPS (HSC)].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6361 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6361 as recommended by Committee on Human Services & Corrections be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Honeyford, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Long, McDonald, Rasmussen, Roach, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, West, Winsley, Wojahn and Zarelli.

Staff: Risa Sandler (786-7708)

Background: Some of the parents whose children attend the Washington State School for the Deaf (WSD) have been concerned for their children's safety, particularly those whose children reside at the school during the school year. These concerns have been raised with both the Governor and some legislators.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The superintendents of both the WSD and the Washington State School for the Blind (WSB) are required to protect the children attending those schools

from abuse or neglect. If abuse or neglect occurs, the superintendents must report this fact to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), law enforcement and the child's parents.

The superintendents of both schools must maintain, in writing, and implement behavior management policies and procedures. The staff of both schools must receive training on techniques in how to manage difficult clients on an ongoing basis. The superintendents of both schools must develop written procedures for the supervision of employees who are likely to have contact with students as well as for the protection of students when there is reason to believe a student has been abused or neglected.

Both schools must provide instruction to the students in how to protect themselves from abuse or neglect.

Both schools have discretion not to admit or retain a student who is an adjudicated sex offender. Neither school may admit or retain an adjudicated Level III sex offender.

Both schools must develop a process for assessing children's propensities of sexual aggressiveness and vulnerability and institute steps to protect the vulnerable children from the aggressive ones.

The ombudsman must report annually on the ability of WSD and WSB to protect children in attendance at the schools from abuse and neglect. This request may be contained in OFCO's annual report. The first report is due December 2000.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Changes in authority of the board of trustees and superintendents are removed. The schools' ability to admit or retain students is broadened. Schools are required to develop and implement procedures to protect sexually vulnerable children from sexually aggressive children.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For (Human Services & Corrections): The children attending the WSD and WSB need protection and this bill ensures they get it.

Testimony Against (Human Services & Corrections): The superintendents of both schools are working on the abuse/neglect issues. A Blue Ribbon Committee is looking into potential issues and will make recommendations in February; therefore, this bill is premature.

Testified (Human Services & Corrections): PRO: Ted Karanson, Public School Deaf Education Program; Loyd Barronelt, Guardian of WSD Students; Joel Sibert, WSD student; Gloria Dominguez, Patricia Bumel, parent; CON: Richard Potts, Steve Rainey, Shannena Wingate-Pearse, Susan McDaniel, parents; Len Aron, Superintendent at WSD; Dean Stenehjen, Superintendent at WSB; Attie Joiner, WSD Board of Trustees; Larry Petersen,

Chair, Washington Assoc. Deaf Education Committee; Bonnie Neeley, member of Blue Ribbon Committee.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): There have been problems with the School for the Deaf since its inception. Board members, teachers, staff resigned last year due to concerns about the environment. Previous one-to-one support to students who had perpetrated abuse was taken away, and there were re-offenses. This bill increases support for students.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Zarelli, prime sponsor; Patricia Bunnell, parent, volunteer WSD worker; Tami Grant, parent, WSD worker.