

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6387

As of January 19, 2000

Title: An act relating to using funds to improve the legal representation of indigent parents and children.

Brief Description: Using funds to improve representation of indigent parents and children.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Hargrove, Swecker, Brown, Patterson, Sheahan, Morton, Long and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/20/2000.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: For some time, counties have been concerned about the increased costs for defense representation in dependency and termination cases when they do not control the volume of cases.

In response to this concern, Senate Bill 5744, passed during the 1999 legislative session, required the Office of Public Defense (OPD) to develop a proposal to address the costs of legal representation and expenses reasonably related to such representation of indigent parents, guardians, legal custodians and children in dependency and termination hearings under chapter 13.34 RCW.— The proposal is also required to address the increased dependency and termination filings and the effect of the increase on indigent defense costs. Further, OPD is to recommend strategies to ensure that an equitable method of paying for indigent defense costs in dependency and termination proceedings is established.—

In a report issued by OPD in December 1999, it makes 11 recommendations for strategies to ensure an equitable method of paying for indigent defense costs. These recommendations are broken down into the following categories: general; defense representation; and children's representatives.

Summary of Bill: The Office of Public Defense, within funds appropriated for this purpose, must distribute funds to improve the legal representation of indigent parents and children in dependency, state-initiated paternity and termination of parental rights cases.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2000.

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