

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5543

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to school safety.

Brief Description: Improving school safety.

Sponsors: By Senate on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Kastama, McAuliffe, Eide, Regala, Rasmussen, Thibaudeau, Costa, Kohl-Welles and Winsley; by request of Governor Locke and Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/21/01, 3/29/01 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

To the extent funds are appropriated:

- Districts are required to establish policies requiring schools to develop comprehensive safe school plans.
- Schools are required to develop site-based comprehensive plans consisting of specified components.
- The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is required to establish a school safety center advisory committee, and a school safety center.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Anderson, Republican Vice Chair; Cox, Ericksen, Keiser, Pearson, Rockefeller, Santos and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

The State Board of Education (SBE) is required to consult with the director of fire protection and adopt rules to provide instruction to pupils in the K-12 public and private schools regarding sudden emergency response plans. The rules must include instruction sufficient to allow pupils and staff to leave their building in the shortest time possible, or to take other steps necessary without confusion and panic. The rules must be published and distributed to certificated personnel through the state. Certificated personnel are responsible for becoming familiar with the rules and for the implementation of rules at their particular school.

During the 1999 and 2000 sessions, the Legislature expanded funding for school safety by creating four new programs: School Safety Planning; School Safety Prevention and Intervention Programs; the Disruptive Students Project; and Safety Allocations.

Funds for school safety planning have supported the development of safety plans, including training, practicing, evaluating, and refining the plans. Sixty-six of the state's 296 districts received grant funding to develop their safety plans for the first two years.

The Legislature provided \$2 million for the 1999-01 biennium for state prevention and intervention programs. These are two-year competitive grants to support proven-effective programs— to improve safety in schools. Grants were awarded to 15 districts.

The Disruptive Student Project provides school-building teams with research-based professional development to assist with problems presented by disruptive students. To date, 127 school-building teams have participated in training.

During the 2000 session, the Legislature provided \$5.6 million to be allocated on an enrollment basis, at a maximum rate of \$10.00 per student, during the 2000-01 school year. These funds may be expended for safety planning and training, equipment, before/during/and after school security, and minor building renovation.

Summary of Amended Bill:

To the extent funds are appropriated, local school boards must establish policies requiring each school to develop a written comprehensive safe school plan. Schools must develop site-based comprehensive plans to include prevention, intervention, all hazards and crisis response, and post-crisis recovery. Schools are required to include parents, students, staff, and local emergency management agencies in their plan development and implementation.

Districts must establish an approval process for comprehensive plans. Plans must be approved by September 1, 2002. Districts also must develop a process to inform students, parents, staff, and volunteers about the district's school-based plans, and must provide to students and parents annually information on the implementation and evaluation of the district's school-based plans.

To the extent funds are appropriated, schools must conduct annual evaluations including reviews, drills, or simulated practices, and must maintain documentation of yearly reviews, drills, or simulated practices, and must make the information available upon written request.

To the extent funds are appropriated, a school safety center must be established in the OSPI for the purpose of providing districts with the assistance necessary to create a consistent, comprehensive approach to school safety. The OSPI must appoint a school safety center advisory committee for the purpose of developing a training program for school safety personnel.

Funds must be distributed to districts based on a per-pupil allocation. No district may be allocated less than \$2,000. If specific funding is not provided, the act does not take effect.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The substitute bill requires the State Board of Education to provide districts with instruction regarding all hazard emergency response plans. To the extent funds are appropriated, districts are required to develop comprehensive safe school plans.

The amended bill requires, to the extent funds are appropriated, the OSPI to establish a safety center to provide districts with information and assistance necessary for districts to develop comprehensive safe school plans. To the extent funds are appropriated, schools are required to develop comprehensive safe school plans.

The amended bill includes a per-pupil allocation and a minimum per-district allocation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Original bill) (Pro) Recent news stories about school violence have brought to the forefront the many risks schools face. An all-hazards approach to school safety speaks to the reality of these risks. The all-hazards plan is part of a comprehensive plan and should be incorporated into a comprehensive plan such as the one in SHB 1818. The comprehensive plan would only be required to the extent funds are appropriated. The comprehensive plan is not a checklist; it is a work in progress and requires monitoring and practice to ensure the plan is current and workable. Schools who review and drill their plans learn what changes are needed. A working

comprehensive plan allows students to remain focused on their studies not their safety. The PTA believes the hotline is a critical element of a safety plan because it help prevent potentially dangerous situations. A hotline could also address individual students in crisis.

(Pro without amendments) The hotline is an unnecessary cost because most all urban districts already have a hotline. Seattle has had one for 10 years and has had only one actionable call in that time. The \$1 per student allocation should go to the districts to be developed locally for such areas as safety/security personnel and training.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Senator Kastama, prime sponsor; Ahndrea Blue, Governor's Office; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators and School Safety First Collaborative; Denise Fitch, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Stephanie Pederson, Esther Hoffman, Christine Pitawanich, Stephanie Connolly, Ashley Beckett, Youth Counts; Carol Taylor-Cann, Washington State PTA and School Safety First Collaborative; and Larry Davis, State Board of Education.

(In support without amendments) David Westberg, Stationary Engineers.