

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1397

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 27, 2002

Title: An act relating to children placed in the care of relatives.

Brief Description: Encouraging support services for kinship caregivers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Kagi, Benson, Kenney, Cody, Schual-Berke and Santos).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/20/02, 2/27/02 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Relatives who take in children of family members (whether these are grandchildren, nieces or nephews, cousins etc.) are recognized as performing a vital function in our society. Children who might otherwise need to be placed in foster care are provided with a stable home, in a setting likely to enhance family reunification, with little need for intervention by the courts or the Department of Social and Health Services. The number of relatives caring for children of family members is increasing. A briefing of the policy issues would ensure that the needs of this special group would be recognized.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature recognizes the value of kinship care givers. The Department of Social and Health Services must convene a working group to review the kinship care givers study being conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, due June 2002. This working group identifies the policy issues to be considered by the Legislature, including a means test, federal and state statutes, and options to address the issues legislatively. The work group briefs the appropriate committees in the Senate and House of Representatives by November 1, 2002.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The work group is required to identify and prioritize policy issues to be included in a briefing to the Legislature. A financial means test is added to those policy issues to be addressed by the work group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Kinship or grandparent caregivers often have unique needs. They are not asking for a handout. Relatives need choices in dealing with a variety of caregiver issues. Children need to know who they are and families provide this identity, often crucial to mental health.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Nancy Eberle, kinship caregiver; Howard Winkler, Family Support Center; Darlene Flowers, Foster Parents Association of Washington; Gina Brimner, Catholic Community Services; Kevin Campbell, Catholic Community Services.