

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5979

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, March 5, 2001

Title: An act relating to school safety.

Brief Description: Establishing a school safety center.

Sponsors: Senators Zarelli, Finkbeiner, Hochstatter and Hewitt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/26/01, 3/5/01 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 3/8/01.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5979 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Carlson, Finkbeiner, Hewitt, Hochstatter, Johnson, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Prentice, Rasmussen, Regala and Zarelli.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: William Freund (786-7441)

Background: Current law requires the State Board of Education, upon the advice of the Washington State Patrol's Director of Fire Protection, to adopt and distribute rules concerning the evacuation of schools during a sudden emergency.— Pursuant to this authority, the State Board has issued rules requiring local school boards and governing bodies of private schools to develop and practice evacuation plans. These plans are to be taught periodically to all school personnel and practiced as frequently as may be necessary.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The School Safety Center is established in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The School Safety Center must: (1) provide successful models of school safety plans; (2) provide assistance to schools to establish comprehensive safe school plans; (3) select models of successful cooperative efforts; (4) act as a resource center during school district incidents; (5) coordinate school safety activities; (6) approve school safety manuals; and (7) develop a school safety web site.

The School Safety Center Advisory Committee is established, comprising membership appointed by various stakeholders, and includes the Superintendent of Public Instruction and law enforcement representatives. The committee must develop a school safety training program for school safety personnel. The Washington State Criminal Justice Training

Commission and the School Safety Center Advisory Committee must provide the training for all school administrators and school safety personnel.

Schools must develop, by September 1, 2003, a comprehensive school safety plan consisting of the following components: (1) prevention; (2) intervention; (3) all hazards and crisis response; and (4) postcrisis recovery. The plans must be developed with staff, students, parents, the community, law enforcement, and emergency preparedness personnel, and must be reviewed annually.

OSPI must contract with an independent vendor to establish a school safety hotline. The hotline must be a confidential toll-free hotline available for school safety issues.

The bill does not take effect if funding is not made available by the Legislature.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2001.

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

Testimony For: Schools do not have the expertise to conduct comprehensive safety planning. The School Safety Center established in this bill would be able to provide the necessary expertise sufficient to enable schools to better prepare for school safety incidents. The Safety Center would also better coordinate the variety of school safety plans currently existing. Additionally, the bill would provide for the establishment of comprehensive training programs for school safety personnel. Such training is essential in order to ensure the safety of school students and staff and to prevent future incidents. Finally, as recent events indicate, the establishment of a school safety hotline would greatly increase efficient distribution of information during an incident and provide an opportunity to prevent incidents.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Zarelli, prime sponsor; Ahndrea Blue, Gov.'s Office (pro w/concerns); Carol Taylor Cann, PTA; Barbara Mertens, WASA, Joe Pope, AWSP; Denise Fitch, OSPI; Doug Nelson, PSE; Michael Parsons, Pam Keselburg, WA State Criminal Justice Training Commission; John Didion, Pacific Co. Sheriff; Rainer Houser, Principals' Assocs.; Dennis Bolz, Fife Sc. Dist.; Cathy Woods, Puyallup Sc. Dist.; Ron Swanson, Enumclaw Sc. Dist.; Rick Thompson, Franklin Pierce High School; David Westberg, Stationary Engineers (pro w/concerns).