

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6702

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2002

Title: An act relating to protecting sibling relationships.

Brief Description: Protecting sibling relationships.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Long, Costa, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Carlson, Hewitt, Kastama, Johnson, Shin, Swecker, Hale, Rossi, Oke, Zarelli, McCaslin, Horn, Thibaudeau, West, Deccio, Rasmussen, Parlette, Sheahan, Benton, McDonald, Roach, T. Sheldon, Hochstatter, Honeyford, Morton, Finkbeiner and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/1/02, 2/6/02 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/14/02, 46-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6702 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Although the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to consider children's and families' multiple needs when assessing dependency cases, there is no requirement that DSHS or the courts take into consideration the need for siblings to maintain contact when a child is placed out of the home.

Summary of Bill: It is the Legislature's intent to presume that nurturing sibling relationships is in the best interests of the child. DSHS must ensure that siblings are provided the opportunity to maintain their relationship through visits, as appropriate. DSHS must take into consideration the need to maintain regular sibling contact when conducting a social study for purposes of out of home care. The courts must consider ordering appropriate visitation between siblings who are separated as a result of a dependency determination within certain conditions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Sibling relationships should be taken into consideration when a child may be removed from the home.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; LaVerne Lamoureux, Children's Administration/DSHS; Linda Lillevik, Washington Defenders Association.