
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

SSB 6457

Brief Description: Creating a study panel for adoption issues.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker, Stevens, Deccio, Prentice, Parlette, Hargrove, Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen).

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convenes a legislative study panel on adoption issues.

Hearing Date: 2/23/04

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

Adoptions in the state occur through licensed private agencies, the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of the Department of Social and Health Services, and independent agents. Requirements, processes, and services offered vary with each of these three methods of adoption, as well as vary by individual agencies.

Children who may be adopted through the DCFS are children residing in foster care who have been abused or neglected and cannot be reunited with their birth parents. Children who may be adopted through private agencies include healthy infants and young children, children from other countries, children with special needs, and children in foster care. Children who may be adopted independently include healthy infants, stepchildren, children from other countries, and relative and other non-agency placements.

Summary of Bill:

It is the intent of the Legislature to convene a study panel on issues relating to adoption composed of four members from the Legislature: two members of the Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate, including one member of the majority party and one member of the minority party; and two members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, including one member from the majority party and one member from the minority party.

The study panel is required to invite the participation of the Governor. The study panel is also required to create an advisory committee to participate in the study panel composed of invited representatives from federally recognized Indian tribes, the Washington State Bar Association, the judiciary, and adoption agencies and child-placing agencies, including state agencies, nonprofit agencies, and those agencies providing services for domestic or international adoptions; adoptive parents; and adoptees.

The study panel is required to study and report findings and recommendations, as well as solicit comments from the community, regarding the current adoption statutes and policies related to the following issues:

- adoption-related fees;
- barriers to adoption;
- child selling and buying;
- adoption facilitation, advertising, and marketing;
- assisted reproductive technology;
- discrimination in adoption based upon ability to pay, race, color, or national origin of child or parent;
- background checks; and
- agency licensing and credentialing.

The study panel is required to report its findings to the Legislature by January 1, 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.