

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2189

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to the safety of child protective services and child welfare services staff.

Brief Description: Establishing a work group to address safety of child protective services and child welfare services staff.

Sponsors: By Representatives Kagi, Hinkle, Dickerson, Roberts, Darneille, Simpson, Moeller, Morrell and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/28/05, 3/2/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/05, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/14/05, 47-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to establish a work group to develop policies and protocols to address the safety of Child Protective Services and Child Welfare Services staff.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

Child Protective Services (CPS) within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides 24-hour, seven-day-a-week intake, screening, and investigative services for reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. The CPS social workers investigate reports of child abuse and neglect to assess the safety and protection needs of children, and, when necessary, intervene by providing services designed to increase safety and protect children from further harm. When it appears that a child is in danger of being harmed or has already been seriously

abused or neglected, the CPS, with a police officer or court order putting the child in protective custody, places the child with a relative or in foster care.

Child Welfare Services (CWS) within the DSHS provides both permanency planning and intensive treatment services to children and families who may need help with chronic or serious problems that interfere with their ability to protect or parent children, such as on-going abuse and neglect or intensive medical needs. Services through the CWS are provided to children and families when longer-term services are needed. Most children served through the CWS are dependents of the state, in out-of-home care, or legally free for adoption.

Summary of Bill:

The DSHS is required to establish a work group to develop policies and protocols to address the safety of the CPS and the CWS staff.

Membership of the work group must include the following: representatives of the Children's Administration of the DSHS, including representatives of CPS staff and CWS staff; law enforcement; and prosecuting attorneys.

The DSHS must provide the developed policies and protocols to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2005.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to make recommendations regarding training to address recognition of highly volatile, hostile, and/or threatening situations and de-escalation and preventive safety measures.

Requires that representatives of Child Protective Services and Child Welfare Services staff to be included in the membership of the work group must be from Community Services Offices in largely rural areas of the state as well as urban areas.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (In support) This bill is greatly appreciated.

(With amendments) The bill should be amended to provide for local engagement with law enforcement and the DSHS staff. Local workgroups would then provide recommendations to the Assistant Secretary of the Children's Administration to establish policies and protocols to address worker safety.

Testimony Against: (In support) This bill assumes that public employees are in danger. It assumes criminal behavior that does not exist. It ought to be a fair, two-sided bill. Input from people who might be considered a threat, with reasoning as to why they might be motivated to be a threat, should be included. The bill is unacceptable without amendments.

Persons Testifying: Bev Hermanson, Washington Federation of State Employees.

(With amendments) David Del Villar Fox, Office of Children's Administration.

(Opposed) Dave Wood, American Family Rights Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.