

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2979

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**As Passed House:**  
February 8, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to addressing cultural upbringing in parenting plans.

**Brief Description:** Addressing cultural upbringing in parenting plans.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Law (originally sponsored by Representatives Hasegawa, Chase, Roberts and Santos).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Juvenile Justice & Family Law: 1/25/06, 1/31/06 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/8/06, 97-1.

<p><b>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires a court to consider the cultural heritage and religious beliefs of a child.</li></ul>
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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE & FAMILY LAW

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Moeller, Vice Chair; McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; McCune, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse, Lovick and Roberts.

**Staff:** Kara Durbin (786-7133).

**Background:**

Under Washington law, divorcing couples with children must establish a parenting plan. The parenting plan establishes the rights and responsibilities of each parent. Each plan must include: (1) a dispute resolution process for handling disagreements between the parents; (2) an allocation of decision-making authority to one or both parents for each child's education, health care and religious training; and (3) a schedule of when each child is to reside with each parent.

A parenting plan must allocate decision-making authority to one or both parents in three areas: education, health care, and religious upbringing. Other areas of decision-making may also be included in the parenting plan. For example, some parenting plans contain a provision that there be joint decision-making for the child's extra-curricular activities that occur during

both parties' parenting time, or activities that require a financial commitment from both parents.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

In establishing a parenting plan, a court must consider the cultural heritage and religious beliefs of a child.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** (Original bill) Maintaining cultural roots is important. Children need to maintain their cultural roots after their parents divorce. The judge can still exercise considerable discretion. There is a lack of understanding about the benefits of cultural diversity, particularly diversity in language. It is important for children to develop a connection with their heritage. Cultural heritage should be given equal weight with other factors that are considered in developing a parenting plan under existing law.

**Testimony Against:** (Original bill) We agree with the value of linguistic education for children. Cultural heritage should be part of a parenting plan. However, we have concerns with this section being placed in the decision-making authority section of the statute.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Hasegawa, prime sponsor; Justice Phil Talmadge; Joyce Shui; Matt Kelley, Mavin Foundation; Ariel Rodriguez, Commission on Hispanic Affairs; and Hawo Sheikh, Highline Community College Child Care Center.

(Opposed) Rick Bartholomew, Washington State Bar Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** Jane Mai-Jin, Chinese Human Rights.