

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2137

As Passed House:

March 8, 2005

Title: An act relating to funding for crime victims' compensation.

Brief Description: Providing additional funding for crime victims' compensation.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Sommers, Walsh, Darneille, Anderson, Chase, Dickerson, Ericks, Roberts, Conway, Linville, Kenney and O'Brien; by request of Office of Financial Management).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/28/05, 3/1/05 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/05, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Appropriates \$3,627,000 to the Department of Labor and Industries from the general fund for the Crime Victims Compensation Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Buri, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, McIntire, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Walsh.

Staff: Nona Snell (786-7153).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) administers the Crime Victims Compensation Program (Program). The Program is the payer of last resort for crime victim's medical expenses and covers all sexual assault forensic examination expenses. Because medical expenses have increased 58 percent in the past year, the currently appropriated amounts will

not cover the Program costs through the end of the biennium. The Program has historically been funded from the Public Safety and Education Account (PSEA).

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The substitute bill appropriates \$3,627,000 from the general fund for fiscal year 2005 to L&I for costs incurred for the Crime Victims Compensation Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Initial sexual assault medical exams can only be done through the Crime Victims Compensation Program, and if they are eliminated, victims' and survivors' burdens will increase. Counseling and medical services through the program help stabilize people and so they can then hold offenders accountable. There is a sense of urgency to pass the bill because the program will run out of funds in March, and letters will go out to victims explaining that their benefits will be stopped. Higher medical rates are due to a reduction in the medically indigent program and people who do not have insurance. Convicted criminals pay restitution, but it does not cover crime victims' costs. The total program cost is \$31 million, including an \$8 million federal grant. Hospitals told L&I that they are billing the program more because of elimination of the medical indigent program.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Toby Cremer, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; Mary Ellen Stone, King County Sexual Assault Resource Center; Carolee Wynhoff, Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County; Scott Merriman, Office of Financial Management; Ernie LaPalm, Department of Labor and Industries; Cletus Nnanabu, Department of Licensing; Roger Kluck, Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy; and Barbara Haner, Providence Everett Sexual Assault.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.