

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5993

As Passed Senate, March 11, 2005

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Doumit, Zarelli, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/28/05, 3/1/05 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/11/05, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Paula Faas (786-7449)

Background: The Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) program is administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). Victims of violent crime are provided with financial assistance under specific eligibility requirements. The program, as the payer of last resort, covers medical and mental health treatment costs, funeral expenses, limited time loss compensation, permanent partial disability awards, and limited pensions. Additionally, it covers the complete cost of sexual assault forensic exams performed by hospitals and emergency medical facilities within Washington State. The program is funded through the Public Safety and Education Account (PSEA) and a federal grant from the Department of Justice. It received an appropriation of \$30.8 million dollars in the 03-05 biennium.

Medical claims for the program have exceeded the forecasted amounts. Prior to September 2004, medical claims were reimbursed at workers' compensation rates. In September 2004, the CVC program reduced reimbursement rates to DSHS/Medicaid rates for medical treatment and sexual assault forensic exams. In-patient hospitalization reimbursement rates were reduced to General Assistance Unemployable. However, despite the reductions, the CVC program forecasts exceeding its 03-05 biennial appropriation by the end of March 2005.

Summary of Bill: \$3,627,000 is appropriated from the state General Fund to the PSEA. This amount is appropriated from the PSEA to the L&I for purposes of the CVC program.

Appropriation: \$3,627,000 for the 03-05 biennium.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: We have created a society where sexual assault victims feel comfortable coming forward for exams and medical services. It is difficult to imagine telling victims to pay for these services. Last year the Providence Everett Sexual Assault Center treated over 700 medical patients. The bill must be acted upon quickly so that families can continue to receive benefits at current levels throughout the rest of this biennium.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Toby Cremer, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs; Carolee Wynhoff, Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County; Barbara Haner, Providence Everett Sexual Assault Center; Ernie LaPalm and Cletus Nnanabu, Department of Labor and Industries; Scott Merriman, Office of Financial Management.