

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6348

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 1, 2006

Title: An act relating to availability of legal aid to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Brief Description: Extending availability of legal aid to undocumented alien victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Sponsors: Senators Kline, Keiser, Thibaudeau, Regala, Rockefeller, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, McAuliffe and Fairley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 1/25/06, 2/1/06 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Rasmussen and Thibaudeau.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Carrell.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The legislature specifies categories of legal cases in which qualified legal aid programs may provide civil representation with state money. Among other things, funds distributed to qualified legal aid programs may not be used directly or indirectly for representation of undocumented aliens.

Summary of Bill: The general restriction on the use of state funds to represent undocumented aliens remains. State funds may, however, be used to represent undocumented aliens who are victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, or human trafficking.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: These are particularly vulnerable victims who are often financially unable or fearful to pursue the available civil remedies. Offenders often use the immigration status of the victims to control them. There are very few other available resources for this group of

victims. Seventy-two percent of these undocumented individuals are actually eligible for changed immigration status, but their abusers hide this information.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Rick Bartholomew, Washington State Bar Association; Joan Caywood, Human Response Network; Mireya Beltre, Safeplace; Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.