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SENATE BILL 5311

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State of Washington

59th Legislature

2005 Regular Session

By Senators Rasmussen, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Mulliken, Stevens, Roach, Shin, Kohl-Welles and Spanel

Read first time 01/20/2005. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating an autism task force; and creating new  
2 sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

5 (1) Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically  
6 appears during the first three years of life;

7 (2) As many as one million five hundred thousand Americans are  
8 believed to have some form of autism;

9 (3) The number of children with autism is increasing;

10 (4) Autistic behaviors not only make life difficult for people with  
11 autism but also make life hard for their families, health care  
12 providers, and teachers;

13 (5) Families coping with this devastating illness are searching for  
14 answers about its causes, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment;

15 (6) Presently, there is no effective means to prevent, fully treat,  
16 or cure the disorder;

17 (7) Early intervention is critical for affected children to gain  
18 maximum benefit from current therapies;

1 (8) Strategies about how to best prevent, identify, treat, and  
2 accommodate the needs of children with autism and their families are  
3 urgently needed.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The caring for Washington children with  
5 autism task force is created to study and make recommendations to the  
6 legislature regarding the growing incidence of autism and ways to  
7 improve the delivery and coordination of autism services in the state.

8 (2) The committee shall consist of fourteen members: Four members  
9 of the legislature, including two members of the senate appointed by  
10 the president of the senate, one of the majority party and one of the  
11 minority party, and two members of the house of representatives  
12 appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, including one  
13 of the majority party and one of the minority party; and ten additional  
14 members appointed by the governor, who shall include at least:

- 15 (a) Two parents of children with autism;
- 16 (b) A representative of the autism center at the University of  
17 Washington;
- 18 (c) A representative of the department of health;
- 19 (d) A representative of the department of social and health  
20 services;
- 21 (e) A representative of the office of the superintendent of public  
22 instruction;
- 23 (f) A representative of a local school district; and
- 24 (g) A representative of an educational service district.

25 (3) The task force shall:

- 26 (a) Review the available literature and consult with experts to  
27 gain an understanding of the causes of the disorder and its incidence  
28 in Washington;
- 29 (b) Assess the availability of services currently provided for  
30 early screening, diagnosis, and treatment of the disorder;
- 31 (c) Assess the availability of services to assist families of  
32 individuals with autism;
- 33 (d) Review the effectiveness of programs and services provided to  
34 individuals with autism and their families;
- 35 (e) Review other issues and concerns that the task force believes  
36 would be helpful in arriving at sound policy recommendations; and

1           (f) Complete its review and submit its recommendations to the  
2 appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature and the  
3 governor by December 1, 2006.

4           (4) The department of health shall be the lead agency in providing  
5 staff needed for the performance of the work of the task force. The  
6 department may seek additional staff assistance from the office of the  
7 superintendent of public instruction and the committee staff of the  
8 legislature.

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