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**Early Learning & Children's  
Services Committee**

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**HB 1472**

**Brief Description:** Analyzing and remedying racial disproportionality and racial disparity in child welfare.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Pettigrew, Haler, Kagi, P. Sullivan, Walsh, Lovick, Barlow, Kenney, McCoy, Darneille, Hasegawa, Roberts, Hinkle, Santos, Appleton, Upthegrove, Williams, Moeller, Ormsby, VanDeWege, Schual-Berke and Dickerson.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services to convene an advisory committee to analyze and make recommendations regarding the disproportionate representation of children of color in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Requires development of a remediation plan and an annual progress report for reducing and eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Hearing Date:** 1/30/07

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

The disproportionate representation of a racial or ethnic group within a system is often referred to as racial disproportionality. In the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, racial disproportionality occurs when a particular racial or ethnic group of children is represented at a higher percentage than other racial or ethnic groups are represented. The concept of racial disproportionality looks across racial and ethnic groups at the relative ratios of children in a system.

A related concept used to discuss disproportionate representation in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems is *over-representation*. This concept looks at the difference between how a

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particular group of children is represented in a system compared with how that same group is represented in the general population.

Racial disparity is a term used to define disparate services provided (type, quantity, or quality) or treatment extended to one or more racial or ethnic groups. Within the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, racial disparity occurs when racial or ethnic minority children receive unequal treatment as compared with non-minority children. Racial disparity also can be used to describe disparate outcomes related to health, mental health, education achievement and graduation rates, permanency, homelessness, or criminal involvement, for different racial or ethnic groups.

Research at the national level illustrates that children of color are represented in foster care at a rate higher than these children are represented in the general population. Within Washington, the most recent look at racial disproportionality in child welfare is the work done in King County beginning in 2004. The data from this research indicates that disproportionate numbers of children of color in King County are represented in the state's child welfare system. Native American and African American children are over-represented at nearly every decision point in the child welfare system. The King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality currently is using this data to implement interventions to address disproportionality at targeted decision points in the system.

The Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) recently participated in a conference coordinated by the National Conference of State Legislatures to address the causes and extent of racial disproportionality in child welfare systems. Also examined were states' efforts to identify promising practices to reduce racial disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color in child welfare.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The Secretary of the DSHS is directed to convene an advisory committee to address racial disproportionality and disparity in Washington's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The advisory group will be comprised of:

- (1) experts in social work, law, child welfare, psychology, and related fields;
- (2) two or more tribal representatives;
- (3) one representative of a community-based organization involved with child welfare or juvenile justice;
- (4) one representative from the DSHS;
- (5) one current or former foster youth;
- (5) one current or former foster parent; and
- (6) one parent previously involved with Washington's child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

Three members will be selected by the Senate, three members by the House, and five by the Governor. The DSHS must make reasonable efforts to seek public and private funding for the advisory committee. The Washington Institute of Public Policy will provide technical assistance to the committee.

The advisory committee must examine and analyze:

- (1) the level of involvement for children of color in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems; and for
- (2) the outcomes for children in the existing systems.

By September 1, 2007, the committee must report the results of its analysis to the DSHS. If the data indicates disproportionality or disparity for one or more racial or ethnic groups within one or more regions in the state, the DSHS must develop a plan to remedy the disproportionality or disparity.

By January 1, 2008, the DSHS must report to the Legislature regarding the analysis undertaken by the committee and the plan to remedy the disproportionality or disparity. Beginning January 1, 2009, and through January 1, 2013, the DSHS must provide the Legislature with an annual progress report on its efforts to reduce and eliminate racial disproportionality and disparity in the state's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The act expires June 30, 2013.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 24, 2007.

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