

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5830

As Amended by House, April 19, 2007

Title: An act relating to home visitation services for families.

Brief Description: Providing home visitation services for families.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, Brown, Rasmussen, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/13/07, 2/21/07 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/08/07, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5830 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Marr and McAuliffe.

Staff: Kiki Keizer (786-7430)

Background: The Legislature established the Washington Council on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Council) in 1982. The Council comprises 14 members who are charged with contracting with organizations or individuals for the establishment of programs designed to reduce the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and promote good parenting skills. Members include designees of the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Secretary of the Department of Health, as well as other persons selected for their interest and expertise in the prevention of child abuse. Four legislative members serve as ex officio members of the Council.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Within available funds, the Council must fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs for parents to improve parenting skills and improve outcomes for children. "Evidence-based program," "home visitation," and "research-based program" are all defined.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Parents are a child's first teachers. All parents need support. These programs are voluntary and target the families at highest risk of child abuse or neglect. Many of the families served are living below the poverty level.

Child abuse and neglect is a cycle with a high human cost. Many children who are abused or neglected become violent criminals. Abuse and neglect also represents a high economic cost to the state in terms of our child welfare and criminal justice systems. Parents need to know about the resources that are available to them and the options they have for making better choices for their children. The state has an obligation to look after vulnerable children.

The research is clear that high-quality home visitation programs make a difference. It is suggested that the Legislature support an array of research-based programs so that communities can choose the best fit. Washington Council on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect does fund a number of models.

"Crime reduction" should be added to the list of benefits of home visitation in the bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Linda Clark, Providence Maternal and Child Health; Bill Mahoney, Cowlitz County Sheriff; Laura Wells, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Kathy Zeisel, Parents as Teachers State Office, Parent Trust for Washington Children; Cathy Garland, Children's Home Society of Washington; Kristen Rogers, Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

House Amendment(s): The Washington Council on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN) is renamed the Children's Trust of Washington, and all existing references in the RCWs to the WCPCAN must be construed to mean the Children's Trust of Washington. In addition to the statutory section defining terms relevant to the WCPCAN, a new section is added to the chapter defining "evidence-based," "primary prevention," and "research-based." The requirement that home visitation programs address the needs of families at high risk of child abuse and neglect has been changed such that programs must address the needs of families to alleviate the effect on child development of factors such as poverty, single parenthood, parental unemployment or underemployment, parental disability, or parental lack of high school diploma, which research shows are risk factors for child abuse and neglect and poor educational outcomes. A plan must be developed by December 1, 2007, by the Children's Trust of Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, and the Family Policy Council to coordinate or to consolidate home visitation services for children and families.