

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6388

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 31, 2008
Ways & Means, February 12, 2008

Title: An act relating to learning disabilities screening, identification, and diagnosis.

Brief Description: Creating pilot programs for learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Roach, McAuliffe, King, Kauffman, Hobbs, Benton, Zarelli, Oemig, Stevens, Kohl-Welles, Kilmer, Sheldon and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/08, 1/31/08 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/11/08, 2/12/08 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hobbs, Holmquist, McDermott, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

Staff: Roman Dixon (786-7438)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6388 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: In 2005 the Legislature created the Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force. In December 2007 the task force submitted a final report to the Legislature in which the task force detailed a list of priority recommendations. Among these priority recommendations were the recommendations to screen all Washington children before the age of three and establish a minimum of one trained autism technical assistance specialist

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in each of the nine educational service districts (ESDs) in order to provide support to teachers and staff.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): A pilot program is established for the purpose of implementing a statewide position of an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) specialist within each ESD. The program must be administered by the participating ESD and, at a minimum, must: (1) provide on-going leadership, training, and consultative services to school districts and other entities; (2) develop infrastructure to facilitate increasing capacity to serve children birth to twenty one years of age with autism and related disorders; (3) collaborate with the autism outreach project; (4) participate in local data gathering efforts related to autism; (5) remain current in a variety of areas related to assisting students with autism; and (6) conform to the principles, values, and mission of each ESD.

The Legislature will start with two pilot programs in two separate ESDs. One pilot must be in Eastern Washington and one in Western Washington. One of the pilots must be an ESD with an exemplary special education cooperative with a history of coordinated community involvement and is already providing screening and other necessary services for children with autism and other learning disabilities. In addition, the first pilot ESD must provide technical support to the second pilot. The two pilot sites must collectively submit a single report to the Legislature by December 2010. The report must indicate how to best expand the program to all nine ESDs and recommend any changes to the program requirements.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): References to diagnosis are removed from the services that the two pilots are supposed to provide. More specificity is provided regarding the services of the two ESD pilots. Coordination and development of infrastructure for early intervention is added to the responsibilities of the pilot sites. A reference is made to the current autism education coordinator position in the Educational Service District in the Yakima area.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: This is one of the bills that came out of the Autism Task Force recommendations. Identification and diagnosis are usually done by doctors; as such, ESDs can't do that. But what they can, and will do, is allow us to identify and service these kids quicker and better. As we continue to work with the birth through three programs, it becomes more apparent that it's really important to find these kids before they reach school age.

OTHER: One concern is that, in its current form, the bill suggests that the ESDs must provide screening and diagnostic service. Autism is a medical condition and screening and diagnosis would be better addressed some place other than the ESDs.

Persons Testifying: (Early Learning & K-12 Education) PRO: Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Brian Jeffries, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill is needed to better serve children with autism. Educational Service Districts are an effective and efficient way to do that. This bill came out of the Autism Task Force. The diagnosis element will be coming out in a later version of the bill and thus really focus on the needed elements of the recommendations, such as training and giving educators the support they need.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Diana Stadden, Autism Society of Washington.