

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5028

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As of January 20, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to triage facilities.

**Brief Description:** Concerning triage facilities.

**Sponsors:** Senators Haugen, Stevens, Harper and Shin.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 1/20/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Staff:** Kevin Black (786-7747)

**Background:** A crisis triage facility is a facility which accepts the placement of a person exhibiting signs of mental illness by police or medical personnel for a period of short-term stabilization and assessment in lieu of placing the person in an emergency room, evaluation and treatment facility, or jail. After a short period, the person may be either detained in an evaluation and treatment facility or jail, or released with referrals for outpatient treatment services. Crisis triage facilities are currently operating in Pierce and Yakima counties; King County has plans to open a crisis triage facility later in 2011.

In 2007 the Legislature created a facility similar to a crisis triage facility called a crisis stabilization unit (CSU). A CSU is licensed by the Department of Health (DOH) and certified by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). A CSU is permitted to detain a person involuntarily for up to 12 hours. There has been some criticism of the regulations developed for the operation and licensure of CSUs as being too stringent. The crisis triage facility in Pierce County is licensed and certified as a CSU.

**Summary of Bill:** A triage facility is defined as a short-term facility licensed by DOH and certified by DSHS which is designed to assess and stabilize an individual or determine the individual's need for involuntary commitment. A triage facility must meet the DOH operating standards for residential treatment facilities. A peace officer is empowered to detain a person suspected of meeting involuntary commitment criteria, or a person who is reasonably suspected of committing acts constituting a nonfelony crime which is not a serious offense and who is known to suffer from a mental disorder, to a triage facility for up to 12 hours.

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*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.*

**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:** PRO: This issue was brought forward by Snohomish County, which is studying how it can administer services in a more cost-effective manner. This bill will improve public safety, improve services, and save money. There is only one CSU in the state because CSUs are too expensive. Implementing this bill is a critical issue for law enforcement. Please add an emergency clause so that we can start right away. This bill targets individuals who don't fit in the criminal justice system, and would not expand the 2007 policy. It strikes a good balance between effective treatment and protection of civil liberties.

OTHER: We need more mental health beds in Washington. This bill should be improved by increasing the allowable period for treatment and mandating a more thorough investigation.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Ken Stark, Snohomish County; John Turner, law enforcement; Tom McBride, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys; Seth Dawson, National Alliance on Mental Illness.

OTHER: Evelyn Bowen-Crawford, citizen.