

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5132

As of February 7, 2011

Title: An act relating to residential habilitation centers.

Brief Description: Concerning residential habilitation centers.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Tom and Kline; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/31/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

Background: The state operates five residential habilitation centers (RHC) established in statute to provide services for persons with developmental disabilities: Rainier School in Buckley, Lakeland Village in Medical Lake, Fircrest School in Shoreline, Frances Haddon Morgan Children's Center in Bremerton, and Yakima Valley School in Selah. In the 1960s there were six RHCs, serving 4000 people. Today the five facilities in operation serve 885, of whom 36 are individuals under age 21.

In addition to room and board, residents receive supervision, therapies, some medical care, assistance with basic activities of daily living like dressing and eating, or in cases where the need is higher, skilled nursing care.

Many of the residents who live in RHCs have spent most of their lives there. Nearly half were admitted as children under age 15 and have lived in the facility for over 40 years. Over the years there have been repeated efforts to reduce the census in RHCs, as trends for providing services to persons with developmental disabilities have increasingly focused on doing so in community settings. These efforts have ultimately resulted in current practice of reducing the bed census through natural or planned attrition, with the exception of the closure of Interlake School in 1994. Last year, the census in RHCs lowered by 46.

Summary of Bill: Residential habilitation center is defined as a state-operated facility for persons 21 years of age and older. All references to child in 71A.20 RCW are replaced with individual.

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.

The names of Lakeland Village, Rainier School, Yakima Valley School, Fircrest School, and Frances Haddon Morgan Children's Center are stricken from statute. Subject to the availability of funds appropriated by the Legislature, RHCs are authorized to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities based upon admissions criteria established by the Department of Social and Health Services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Institutions represent a choice that was made for people with developmental disabilities when other choices weren't available. Today there are many other options and the state continues to try to expand those community options. Consolidating these institutions will allow the state to use the expertise from those facilities to provide services to more people in the community. Today, 3 percent of the people with disabilities use 20 percent of the resources. Its time to free up resources to be available to people who are getting none. The state should avoid putting a new generation of children in institutions. State operated living arrangements will be developed to provide care and jobs in the community for current residents of RHCs, and employees who are currently working in them.

CON: Many residents have lived in these institutions their whole lives. Many of them cannot be supported in the community because they have behavior issues that require full time attention and expertise that isn't available to families anywhere but in RHCs. Taking the names of these schools out of statute means the Legislature is abdicating its responsibility to the executive branch who will abandon these institutions due to budget concerns. It's irresponsible to eliminate the Legislature's role in deciding the future of RHCs. The language in this bill slams the RHC doors shut to all the children currently in them, and this means they will all have to leave immediately no matter how long they have lived there or where they would have to go. Hundreds of people will lose their jobs. This will be devastating to a town like Buckley where so many people have been employed at Rainier Schools. Why not expand RHC's and make them more profitable?

Persons Testifying: PRO: Andi Smith, Governor's Office; Susan Dreyfus, DSHS; Diana Stadden, parent; Mike Raymond, Self Advocates of Washington; Susanne Walker, AmyVujovich, Shoreline Schools; Chad Higman, Community Residential Services Association.

CON: Maria Walsh, Terri Anderson, Friends of Fircrest; Cheryl Felak, Because We Care; Sharlene Davis, Ambitions; Patricia Johnson, City of Buckley; Jeff Johnson, Greg Devereux, Sola Raynor, Washington State Labor Council.