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SENATE BILL 6602

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State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2012 Regular Session

By Senators Roach and Chase

Read first time 02/23/12. Referred to Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

1 AN ACT Relating to the creation of a child welfare transparency  
2 committee; and adding a new chapter to Title 74 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature is increasingly concerned  
5 about the handling of child welfare cases by the children's  
6 administration in the department of social and health services. It has  
7 been difficult for either the legislature or the public to fully  
8 understand the workings of the child welfare system because so much  
9 information is kept from public view. The legislature finds that the  
10 creation of a transparency committee to review and investigate certain  
11 child welfare cases may assist in shedding light on how the children's  
12 administration is performing.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1)(a) A child welfare transparency  
14 committee is created within each of the six regions of the department  
15 of social and health services to review and investigate child welfare  
16 cases as provided in this chapter.

17 (b) The members of the committee must be appointed as follows:

1 (i) The governor shall appoint one member for each committee  
2 established in each of the department's six regions;

3 (ii) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each  
4 of the two largest caucuses of the senate for each committee  
5 established in each of the department's six regions; and

6 (iii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one  
7 member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of  
8 representatives for each committee established in each of the  
9 department's six regions.

10 (c) No member can be a current employee of the department, have  
11 been employed by the department within the past five years, or have  
12 immediate relatives, by blood or marriage, who are currently employed  
13 by the department.

14 (d) The names of the members of the committees must be made public.

15 (e) Each committee shall select a chair from among its membership.

16 (f) The members shall serve three-year terms and must be staggered,  
17 beginning August 1, 2012.

18 (2)(a) The purpose of the child welfare transparency committee is  
19 to review and investigate child welfare cases in which the department  
20 of social and health services is currently or has, within the last  
21 twelve months, been involved.

22 (b) The committee has the discretion to determine which cases  
23 brought to its attention merit review or investigation.

24 (c) To assist the committee in its work, the children's  
25 administration shall provide, upon the committee's request, any  
26 documents it has regarding the cases being reviewed or investigated by  
27 the committee. These documents must be provided within fourteen days  
28 of being requested. The children's administration shall also make  
29 personnel involved in the case being reviewed or investigated available  
30 to the committee if needed.

31 (3) All meetings of the committee must be open to the public,  
32 unless the committee is discussing information that is otherwise  
33 confidential under state or federal law.

34 (4) The committee may consider input from interested parties.

35 (5) The children's administration shall provide staff support to  
36 the committee.

37 (6) Legislative members of the committee must be reimbursed for  
38 travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative

1 members, except those representing an employer or organization, are  
2 entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW  
3 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

4 (7)(a) The chair shall convene an initial meeting of the committee  
5 no later than September 1, 2012.

6 (b) The committee must meet at least once a quarter and may hold  
7 additional meetings at the call of the chair or by a majority vote of  
8 the members of the committee.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Sections 1 and 2 of this act constitute a  
10 new chapter in Title 74 RCW.

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