

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2610

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to identifying characteristics of the homeless youth population.

Brief Description: Identifying characteristics of the homeless youth population.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Kagi, Freeman, Fitzgibbon, Sawyer, Senn, Bergquist, Walkinshaw, Lytton, Ryu, Farrell, Jinkins, Robinson, Roberts, Gregerson, Santos and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/3/14, 2/5/14 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct an analysis to identify characteristics of the homeless youth population ages birth to 10 years of age.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Freeman, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Goodman, MacEwen, Ortiz-Self, Roberts, Sawyer, Senn, Young and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

Background:

In the State of Washington data on adults and youth experiencing homelessness are collected in several ways. For example, the Department of Commerce conducts an annual homeless census that counts homeless individuals living outdoors, in shelters, and in transitional housing. A summary of the Washington homeless census is made public each year.

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 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction also collects data each year on homeless children and youth served by districts in Washington. The information collected is used to determine if homeless youth and children have access to a free, appropriate, public education.

Additionally, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) has conducted evaluations on housing supports and evaluations that examined characteristics of street youth, utilization of HOPE centers and Responsible Living Skills programs, and services provided to program participants.

Summary of Bill:

The WSIPP is directed to conduct an analysis to identify characteristics of the homeless youth population ages birth to 10 years of age.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) We still have a problem understanding homelessness and, in particular, homelessness in the early years. We are absent good information on the extent of homelessness among children ages birth through 10 years of age and we do not know much about how well those children are being served. Because the Legislature attempts to be fact-based when making policy decisions, there is a need to study this population.

One of the barriers homeless families face when leaving homelessness is access to child care. Many families do not qualify for the Working Connections Child Care. Child care provides stability for children and gives parents the opportunity to find work. A study will, for the first time, count the number of homeless children birth through age five who are homeless. Once we have the data, the state can begin to address the deficiencies in the homeless child care system.

In order to make good decisions, you need good data. We simply do not know how many young children are homeless or what that population looks like. In order to best target resources and intervene appropriately, we need to know who the children are, where they are, and their circumstances.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Fey, prime sponsor; Mary Pedersen, Wellspring Family Services; and Nick Federici, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.