

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2610

As Passed House:
February 14, 2014

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

Brief Description: Identifying characteristics of the homeless youth population.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education (originally sponsored by 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];
Appropriations Subcommittee on Education: 2/6/14 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/14, 71-25.

Brief Summary of Substitute 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.
- Adds a null and void clause.

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).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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.

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Fagan, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Dahlquist, Haler, Lytton, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Sullivan and Wilcox.

Staff: Catrina Lucero (786-7192).

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.

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 Substitute Bill:

The WSIPP is directed to conduct an analysis to identify characteristics of the homeless youth population ages birth to 10 years of age. Additionally, the WSIPP is directed to pursue information gathering techniques with organizations that provide services to homeless youth and their families to identify barriers to accessing services, whether the services available meet the need of the homeless population, and whether there are services needed by this population that are not available. To the extent possible, the WSIPP is to identify the number of homeless youth in Washington from birth to 10 years old and the average length of homelessness for this population. The report is due to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2014. A null and void clause is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & Human Services):

(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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education):

(In support) The Working Connections Child Care Program is currently insufficient to meet the needs of the homeless youth. When we started looking at the gaps in homeless child care we realized that there is no data on the number of homeless children between the ages of 0 to 5. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction counts the number of homeless children in the K-12 system, but nothing is collected on children ages 0 to 5. Before we can address the pressing need for early learning for this vulnerable population, there needs to be data on the characteristics of homeless children ages 0 to 5. This bill will provide us with this data to support good policy.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & Human Services): Representative Fey, prime sponsor; Mary Pedersen, Wellspring Family Services; and Nick Federici, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): Representative Fey, prime sponsor; and Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & Human Services): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations Subcommittee on Education): None.