

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2665

As Passed House:
February 18, 2014

Title: An act relating to the advisory committee on the disproportionate representation of children of color in Washington's child welfare system.

Brief Description: Concerning the expiration of the advisory committee on the disproportionate representation of children of color in Washington's child welfare system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Kagi, Sawyer, Gregerson, Freeman and Ortiz-Self; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

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

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/18/14, 56-42.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the advisory committee to develop membership rules in consultation with specific commissions.
- Directs the advisory committee to conduct an analysis examining the number of children involved in the child welfare system with incarcerated parents.
- Adds a sunset process requiring a review of the effectiveness and performance of the advisory committee by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee.
- Repeals all expiration dates for the work of the advisory committee.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Freeman, Vice Chair; Goodman, Ortiz-Self, Roberts, Sawyer and Senn.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, MacEwen, Young and Zeiger.

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

Background:

In 2007 the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was directed to convene an advisory committee to analyze and make recommendations regarding disproportionate representation of children of color in the states child welfare system. As a result, the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee (WSRDAC) was established.

The current membership of the WSRDAC includes the following 15 members: (1) experts in social work, law, child welfare, psychology, or related fields; (2) at least two tribal representatives; (3) a representative of the Governors Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee; (4) a representative of a community-based organization involved with child welfare issues; (5) a representative from the DSHS; (6) a current or former foster care youth; (7) a current or former foster parent; and (8) a parent previously involved with Washington's child welfare system. In addition to data collection and analysis, the WSRDAC submits recommendations for remediation to the DSHS. The Secretary of DSHS is required to report annually to the Legislature on the implementation of the remediation plan, including any measurable progress made in reducing and eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity in the states child welfare system.

The legislative mandate for the WSRDAC originally expired on June 30, 2013, and was later extended to June 30, 2014.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The WSRDAC is directed to develop membership rules by August 1, 2014, and include the membership rules in the annual secretarys report. When developing membership rules, the advisory committee is required to consult with the Governors Office of Indian Affairs, the Washington State Commission on African-American Affairs, the Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, and the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

The advisory committee is directed to conduct an analysis examining the number of children involved in the child welfare system with incarcerated parents. The analysis is to be disaggregated by racial and ethnic group and by geographic region. The annual Secretary's report is required to include findings from the analysis on the number of children involved in the child welfare system with incarcerated parents.

A sunset review process was also added directing a review of the effectiveness and performance of the advisory committee by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC). All expiration dates for the work of the WSRDAC are repealed.

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) The WSRDAC plays a central part in keeping Washington focused on the issue of children of color being over represented in the child welfare system. The WSRDAC has been very helpful in providing guidance in the Children's Administration, including evaluations of the structured decision-making tool and family team decision-making meetings, and kinship care policies.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: David Fox, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.