

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5571

As of April 4, 2014

Title: An act relating to increasing public awareness of mental illness and its consequences.

Brief Description: Increasing public awareness of mental illness and its consequences.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Litzow, Keiser, Dammeier, Rolfes, Rivers, Mullet, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Shin, Ranker, Kline and Murray.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/14/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: A public awareness campaign is an effort to raise awareness about a matter of public importance through the use of public media.

A Health Impact Review of this legislation was requested and is available at the Washington State Board of Health's website: sboh.wa.gov/OurWork/HealthImpactReviews.aspx.

Summary of Bill: Subject to funding, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must develop and conduct an ongoing public awareness and education campaign regarding mental health and mental illness in both adults and children. DSHS must collaborate with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Health, Regional Support Networks, advocacy groups, children and family nonprofit organizations, violence prevention associations, and tribes. The campaign must include information about stigma, prevalence, the benefits of early identification, effective responses and referrals, and appropriate treatment for mental disorders. The campaign must use multiple communication strategies, including use of websites, community training, and print materials. The campaign must be proportional around the state and targeted to reach persons from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds who live in geographically isolated areas, who have low literacy skills, and who are part of special populations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Throughout our state history, we have seen outstanding results from public awareness campaigns. Mental health issues are of critical importance to families, individuals, communities, and the public. Our nation also must focus on the needs of our troops returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. We can prevent issues from escalating to crisis with early intervention and by working together. Families in denial need to see that there is hope. We must increase our efforts to educate the public on how to gain access to care. Best practices are emerging for early intervention. Untreated mental illness presents challenges and risks for law enforcement. Treatment works, but nearly two thirds of persons with mental illness never seek help from a mental health professional. Stigma and ignorance kill. A public awareness campaign would start conversations and bring guidance to people who need it. My son died because we could not get help for his mental illness. The system is broken.

OTHER: I take issue with the presumption that we are not aware of the problems of persons with mental illnesses. Future generations will look back in shame at the way we incarcerate these persons. We need to stop bad-mouthing hospitals. We are depriving persons with mental illnesses from work opportunities which would help them build better lives. We train them to be malingers so they can remain dependent on state services. We need structured continuity of care for this population.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Donald Duncan, Mountlake Terrace Police Dept.; Tom Sebastian, Compass Health; Jim Bloss, Lorena Taylor-McPhail, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

OTHER: Eleanor Owen, NAMI Family Advocate.