

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1928

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

Title: An act relating to the homeless youth population.

Brief Description: Requiring an analysis of the homeless youth population.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Kagi, Jinkins, McBride, Senn, Robinson, Walkinshaw, Tharinger, Tarleton, Appleton, Kilduff, Ortiz-Self, Bergquist, Gregerson, Ormsby, Pollet and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/10/15, 2/11/15 [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 from birth to age 10.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Walkinshaw, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Kilduff, Sawyer and Senn.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dent and McCaslin.

Staff: Ashley Paintner (786-7120).

Background:

In 1999 the Washington State Legislature passed the Hope Act, which required the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development and the Department of Social and Health Services to develop a collaborative approach to serving homeless families.

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.

Additionally, the Hope Act established two service programs, HOPE Centers and Responsible Living Skills programs, for street youth who have no family support or for whom foster placements have not been successful.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted three evaluations of the Hope Act that examined characteristics of street youth, utilization of HOPE Centers and Responsible Living Skills programs, and services provided to program participants. Since the publication of the most recent evaluation in 2002, the WSIPP has not conducted a robust study examining the characteristics of younger homeless children in Washington.

Summary of Bill:

The WSIPP is authorized to conduct an analysis to identify characteristics of the homeless youth population from birth to age 10. Included in the analysis should be a survey of the best practices of other states and recommendations to the Legislature regarding the most cost-effective ways to support this population. To the extent possible, the WSIPP must identify the number of homeless youth in Washington from birth to age 10 and the average length of homelessness for this population. The report is due to the Legislature by December 31, 2015, and a final report must be submitted by June 30, 2016.

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:

(In support) Tacoma is experiencing a very high rate of youth homelessness. The state does have information that is collected by school districts that tells us a little about children when they reach school-age, but there is very little information on children younger than age 5. Some of these children may have siblings in elementary school, but we also want to gather information on children not in school. Part of the challenge for getting an accurate count on the number of homeless children is that different agencies have different definitions of homelessness. House Bill 1928 would address this issue by having the WSIPP collect specific demographic information so they can report to the Legislature on the number of homeless youth, but also the number of youth who are living in a "doubled-up" housing situation or other specified living arrangements.

House Bill 1928 is important for several reasons: (1) we don't know how many children are homeless; and (2) this is a population that has very intense needs. One tweak made to this bill was to have the WSIPP look at what other states are doing and what other best practices

exist for working with homeless young children. The bill focused on birth to age 10 because those seem to be the most pivotal years in a child's development.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Fey, prime sponsor; and Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.