

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2394

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

Title: An act relating to creating the parent to parent program for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Brief Description: Creating the parent to parent program for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Senn, Kagi, Moscoso, Kilduff, Kochmar, Dent, Holy, Sawyer, Jinkins, Tharinger, Magendanz, Fey, Tarleton, Zeiger, Sells, McBride, Bergquist, Pollet, Santos, S. Hunt and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/19/16, 1/22/16 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/4/16, 2/9/16 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that the Parent to Parent Program that provides support to parents of individuals with developmental disabilities from other parents that have children with developmental disabilities be funded through the Developmental Disability Administration to a state lead organization.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Kilduff, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Sawyer and Walkinshaw.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

The Parent to Parent Program.

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 Parent to Parent Program connects parents of children with certain disabilities and special needs with other volunteer parents who also have children with similar disabilities or special needs. The volunteer parents provide peer and emotional support. The program also offers educational trainings and workshops for parents.

There are Parent to Parent programs in 31 counties including Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Columbia, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Whitman, and Yakima.

Parent to Parent USA is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote access and quality in parent to parent support for all families who have children or adolescents with a special health need, mental health issue, or disability. In Washington, many of the Parent to Parent programs are hosted by The Arc of Washington State.

Summary of Bill:

Goals for the Parent to Parent Program for individuals are established and include:

- providing early outreach, support and education to parents of children with special needs;
- matching a trained volunteer support parent with a new parent who has a child with similar needs; and
- providing parents with tools and resources to be successful.

Activities of the Parent to Parent Program may include:

- outreach and support to newly identified parents of children with special needs;
- educational trainings for parents to support their children;
- ongoing peer support from a trained volunteer support parent; and
- regular communication with other local programs.

If funds are provided, the Parent to Parent Program must be funded through the Developmental Disability Administration to a Washington State lead organization that has extensive experience supporting and training support parents for individuals with developmental disabilities. Through a contract with the lead organization, each local program must be administered by a host organization. The lead organization shall provide ongoing training to the host organizations and statewide program oversight.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2016.

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) There are now 19 local agencies that provide Parent to Parent programs. The statewide program is hosted by The Arc of Washington. Some of the local programs are hosted by The Arc of Washington, but many are not. Some of the local programs are stand-alone programs, and others are hosted by the Department of Health. Many of these programs run on a shoestring. There is now a network of Parent to Parent programs across the United States. The goal of the program is to match a parent with a trained helper parent. The Parent to Parent Program increases family resiliency. Families have many professionals in their lives, but there is nothing more reassuring than having the help of another parent who has shared similar experiences. The Parent to Parent Program assists parents in preparing individual education plans and in advocating for families. Having the support of other parents prevents families from feeling isolated. The South Sound Parent to Parent program serves families in Thurston and Mason counties. This program helps remove families from the isolation that they otherwise experience. The program provides educational workshops and help navigating the support system. The number of families seeking help from the Parent to Parent Program has been quite staggering. It is difficult to keep up with the demands of families. The programs are scraping together what they can but trying to serve as many families as possible.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Sue Elliott, The Arc of Washington State; Cathy Marihashi, The Arc of King County; Marci Taylor, Community Employment Alliance; Susan Alexander; and Kim Smith, South Sound Parent to Parent.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Dunshee, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Parker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Cody, Dent, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, MacEwen, Magendanz, Pettigrew, Robinson, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stokesbary, Sullivan, Tharinger, Van Werven and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Taylor.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Condotta.

Staff: Mary Mulholland (786-7391).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Early Learning & Human Services:

No new changes were recommended.

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) Sometimes a lot of money is not needed for programs that can have a lot of impact. The Parent to Parent program has been around for 30 years, and people are now thinking it is time to expand the program to all of the counties in the state. Parents of children with developmental disabilities often have trouble navigating the system and their daily life. Much progress has been made in helping this population of individuals. Last year, a similarly named program referred to as Parent for Parent was created to connect child welfare system-involved parents with other parents who were veterans of the child welfare system, with the goal of reducing recidivism. The program being addressed today is specifically for the parents of children with developmental disabilities. Autism is one example of a developmental disability that is prevalent in Washington. The program will prevent parents from experiencing a sense of isolation. People can instead reach out to other families who can help them navigate the system so that parents can do the best they can for their children. Money for Parent to Parent is very well-spent, and good outcomes and savings are expected by expanding the program to all counties in the state.

Nineteen Parent to Parents currently receive funding from the Arc of Washington in 31 counties. The programs began getting some funding from the state about five years ago. All programs are locally operated and get other funding from sources like bake sales and the United Way. The Legislature could choose to either expand the program to additional counties, or to give each existing program a little more money. Most programs operate on a shoe string and are run by mothers who have a child with a developmental disability and want to help other parents.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Walsh, prime sponsor; and Sue Elliot, The Arc of Washington State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.