

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2834

As Passed House:
February 15, 2016

Title: An act relating to implementing the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Brief Description: Concerning implementation of the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Senn, Walsh, Kagi, Fey, Kilduff, Stanford and McBride; by request of Washington State Department of Commerce).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/3/16, 2/5/16 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/15/16, 77-20.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Allows the Department of Social and Health Services to share certain child welfare records with the Department of Commerce for purposes of meeting the service needs of youth admitted to Crisis Residential Centers or HOPE Centers under contract with the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection.
- Allows unaccompanied youth ages 13 and older to give consent for the collection of personally identifying information for the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kilduff, Ortiz-Self, Sawyer and Walkinshaw.

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 3 members: Representatives Hawkins, McCaslin and Scott.

Staff: Ashley Paintner (786-7120).

Background:

In 2015 the Legislature passed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5404, which created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (Office) within the Department of Commerce (COM). The Office is responsible for leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth with a stated goal of preventing state systems from discharging youth and young adults into homelessness. Additionally, the Office was authorized to provide the management and oversight of HOPE Centers, Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs), street youth services, and the Independent Youth Housing Program.

HOPE Centers provide temporary residential placements for street youth under the age of 18. Youth may self-refer to a HOPE Center for services, and entering a center is voluntary. While residing in a HOPE Center, youth undergo a comprehensive assessment in order to develop the best plan for the youth.

The CRCs are short-term, semi-secure facilities for runaway youth and adolescents in conflict with their families. Youth cannot remain in a CRC more than 15 consecutive days. Counselors at a CRC work with the family to resolve the immediate conflict and develop better ways of dealing with the conflict in the future. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for licensing CRCs.

The COM oversees Washington's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The HMIS is used by state and federally funded homeless and housing service providers to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people already experiencing homelessness and to households at-risk of losing their housing. The stated purpose of the HMIS is to provide updated information on the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the state.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The DSHS may share certain child welfare records with the COM for purposes of meeting the service needs of youth admitted to CRCs or HOPE Centers under contract with the Office. The administrator of a CRC must notify the DSHS of duties related to the admission only if the child is a dependent. The COM is responsible for collecting and distributing information on state agencies who agree to participate in a multidisciplinary team working with the administrator of a CRC. Payments for a HOPE Center bed are not contingent upon approval from the DSHS. Additionally, unaccompanied youth ages 13 and older may consent to the collection of personally identifying information for purposes of the Washington HMIS.

The definition of "child in need of services petition" is modified to clarify that that it is the role of the DSHS to file a petition and not the responsibility of the COM.

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) Whenever we create a new entity there are some policies that need to be revised in order to ensure an efficient and smooth transition. While working on getting the Office operational, it was recognized that several technical changes needed to be made to clarify the responsibilities of the DSHS and the COM for purposes of serving homeless youth. For example, a technical fix is needed in order to allow providers at HOPE Centers and CRCs to access child welfare records of the youth admitted to these facilities.

It is also important that we allow youth to consent to providing their personal information. Gathering data on homeless youth is crucial for guiding policy and understanding the scope of the need. Data drives decision making, and as the Office works with the Legislature they would like to provide well-informed guidance backed by outcome data. Additionally, the young people working with the Mockingbird Society as part of the Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH) program support the bill and believe that if they can't consent to have their data collected they can't be counted. The YAEH participants would like the Office to be able to gather data on all youth experiencing homelessness in order to effectively carry out the duties assigned to it by the Legislature.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Kim Justice, Department of Commerce; David Del Villar Fox, Department of Social and Health Services; and Erin McCann, The Mockingbird Society and Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.