

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5883

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Law & Justice, February 18, 2015

Title: An act relating to human trafficking informational posters in public restrooms.

Brief Description: Requiring that human trafficking information be posted in public restrooms.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Padden, Keiser, Conway, Chase and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/16/15, 2/18/15 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5883 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; O'Ban, Vice Chair; Pedersen, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

Background: Public safety and health agencies frequently use public information campaigns to build awareness of public dangers. In 2010 British Columbia hosted the Winter Olympics. Washington officials anticipated an influx of visitors for the event that would attract human trafficking criminal enterprises to Washington. The Legislature authorized nonprofit organizations to place informational human trafficking posters in the restrooms at Washington's Interstate 5 rest stops. The purpose was two-fold: informing the public at large about criminal human trafficking, and notifying human trafficking victims about available help. Expanding the anti-trafficking information campaign to additional public settings improves victim outreach and improves public understanding of the harms of human trafficking.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Office of Crime Victim Advocacy must review and approve a model human trafficking notice for use in an anti-trafficking information campaign. The notice will be printed and distributed by anti-trafficking nonprofit organizations participating in the campaign. Once the model notice is available, all establishments that maintain a restroom available to the public must post the anti-trafficking notice in full view of the establishment's employees and customers.

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 Office of Crime Victims' Advocacy will coordinate input from businesses with public restrooms and with anti-trafficking advocates to set policies for placement of the anti-trafficking posters.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Washington's exemplary ratings in 2013 and 2014 from the Polaris Project and Shared Hope International demonstrate the strength of the state's anti-trafficking laws. The Office of Crime Victims Advocacy must work with businesses and with advocacy groups to develop policies for the placement of the anti-trafficking posters in business establishments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: The posted notices in public restrooms will do several things: let victims know about the resources that are available to help, let victims know that persons who are trafficked matter, keeps the issue before the public, and tell traffickers that Washington doesn't tolerate human trafficking. There is success through parallel messaging, for example the fetal alcohol posters educate the general public as well as assisting those persons affected. It would be a good idea, and very important to businesses that will be posting the notices, to reach out and seek their input about the notices that will be displayed in their businesses.

CON: The premise is not evidence based. There is no evidence showing that large sporting events such as the Olympic Games attract human traffickers to the locale of the event. The evidence is to the contrary, there is no appreciable increase in trafficking-related activity associated with large events. Rather than wasting money on signs and posters, printing costs, etc. the money should be given to help victims directly.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, primary sponsor; Stephanie Martinez, Seattle Against Slavery; Lindsay Holmes, Shared Hope International; Paige Heffer, the Justice and Mercy Foundation; Rose Gundersen, WA Engage; Mark Johnson, WA Retailers Assn.

CON: Michelle O'Connor, Sex Worker Outreach Project.