

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5897

As of February 13, 2015

Title: An act relating to providing funding for medical evaluations of suspected victims of child abuse.

Brief Description: Requiring costs for the examination of a suspected victim of assault of a child to be paid by the state.

Sponsors: Senators Cleveland, Darneille, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/12/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Lindsay Erickson (786-7465)

Background: In 1973 the Legislature established the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund (CVCF) to cover victims' medical bills and other costs associated with the offender's crime. State law requires the CVCF to pay for initial sexual assault examinations that are conducted for gathering evidence for possible prosecution. These activities are known as the SAFE program. The Washington Administrative Code specifies that the state is the primary payer of this benefit and the client is not required to file an application with the CVCF to receive this benefit. The Washington Department of Labor and Industries administers the funds associated with the CVCF. Currently, child sexual abuse exams are eligible for reimbursement through the CVCF, but child physical abuse exams are not eligible for the same reimbursement.

Summary of Bill: The state must pay for costs incurred by an institution for the examination of a suspected victim of assault of a child in the first, second, or third degree. Institution is defined as a private or public hospital or any other facility providing medical diagnosis, treatment, or care.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2015.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It seems unfair to reimburse for one type of victimization and not the other. This bill fixes that disparity. Medical evaluation is important in the cases of suspected physical abuse to assess injuries such as pattern of bruises and burns, broken bones, or head trauma. The visit allows photo documentation and collection of lab or radiographic images. Early identification of abusive injuries can help remove the victim from harm's way, reduce risk of further life-altering injuries, and provide evidence for prosecution. This bill supports children and their families in times of crisis.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Cleveland, prime sponsor; Lisa Lyons, Ph.D., Manager, Pediatric Specialty Programs, Legacy Health System.