

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6329

As of February 2, 2016

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: Senators O'Ban, Conway, Becker, Fain, Cleveland, Dammeier, Keiser, Darneille, Rolfes, Hobbs, Litzow, Angel, McAuliffe, Habib and Jayapal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/02/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

Background: The Parent to Parent Program. 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;

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- 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 will be funded through the Developmental Disability Administration and administered by a Washington State lead organization that has extensive experience supporting and training support parents for individuals with developmental disabilities. Each local program must be administered by a host organization through a contract with the lead organization. The lead organization shall provide ongoing training to the host organizations and statewide program oversight.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is an example of government at its prime; empowering communities to do this kind of work. Parent to Parent programs help families in the crucial years when families might feel most isolated, even if they have the support of a spouse, parents, and extended family. This program is a lifeline to families who are new to down syndrome, autism, developmental disabilities, and special health care needs. Ethnic outreach is also done. Isolation can lead to crisis which is why it's crucial that this program is expanded statewide to reach families in rural and impoverished areas. South Sound Parent to Parent serves both Thurston and Mason counties. They do a need assessment every year. The main thing is that parents feel isolated, overwhelmed, or too tired especially in the early years. South Sound provided educational workshops, help navigating systems, and outings. From 2012-2014 South Sound fielded 13,000 calls from parents seeking some sort of support. Parents are provided with assistance for IEPs, self-help, and moral support. There are also "sibshops" which are classes for siblings to express their trials and tribulations. Every family wants to feel like they are no longer alone.

Suggestion: expand the bill to include children with special needs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Susan Atkins, Kim Smith, Marilyn Cooks, Sylvia Davenport, and Rachel Nemhauser, Parent to Parent programs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.