

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6372

As of March 21, 2016

Title: An act relating to counties providing and maintaining detention rooms or detention houses.

Brief Description: Clarifying which counties may provide and maintain detention rooms or detention houses.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille, Rivers, Hargrove and Braun.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 1/25/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Lindsay Erickson (786-7465)

Background: Juvenile Detention Services Generally. Under current law, juvenile probation counselor and detention services must be administered by the superior court, except that:

1. by local court rule and agreement with the county legislative authority, these services may be administered by the county legislative authority;
2. if a consortium of three or more counties, located east of the Cascade mountains and whose combined population exceeds five hundred thirty thousand, jointly operates a juvenile correctional facility, the county legislative authorities may prescribe for alternative administration of the juvenile correctional facility by ordinance; and
3. in any county with a population of one million or more, probation and detention services shall be administered in accordance with chapter 13.20 RCW.

The administrative body must appoint an administrator of juvenile court, probation counselor, and detention services who shall be responsible for day-to-day administration of such services, and who may also serve in the capacity of a probation counselor.

House or Room of Detention. Under current law, counties containing more than fifty thousand inhabitants must, and counties containing a lesser number of inhabitants may, provide and maintain at public expense, a detention room or house of detention, separated or removed from any jail, or police station, to be in charge of a matron, or other person of good character, wherein all children within the provisions of chapter 13.04 RCW shall, when necessary, be sheltered.

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.

Summary of Bill: The population of counties that must provide and maintain a detention room or detention house is raised from fifty thousand inhabitants to two hundred fifty thousand inhabitants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2016.

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: Counties are working to reduce dependency on detention beds and nights in detention as their responses to juveniles brought into juvenile detention facilities. For those counties utilizing detention facilities less and less, this bill allows for continued conversation as to the financial viability of those decisions for counties. For example, King County is utilizing its juvenile detention at only 25 percent capacity, and Pierce County is at 30 percent capacity. Underutilized facilities are statewide. Right now, the only way to house youth is in detention facilities. This bill would allow the counties to free up some facilities and partner with other counties to create regional centers that would provide non-detention, rehabilitation-based treatment for juveniles. If this does not happen, the state will eventually need to build new facilities.

CON: While more options are good for juveniles, such as detention alternatives and crisis centers, the problem is that these options are not available in all regions around the state. In lesser populated regions, sometimes the detention centers are the only option because the juveniles need to be safe, and the detention centers can still provide juveniles with services. It is better to have more options, but not all counties have these options. There is concern that this bill does not actually guarantee that counties would enter into the regional agreements if presented with the option. Transportation to and from the facilities may also be an issue for juveniles and families living within large regional areas.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Darneille, Prime Sponsor; Brian Enslow, WA State Assoc. of Counties.

CON: Tom McBride, Washington State Association of Juvenile Court Administrators.

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