

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2442

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to creating a students protecting students program.

Brief Description: Creating a students protecting students program.

Sponsors: Representative Manweller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/25/18, 1/30/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires school districts to report on their use of incident alert and reporting systems (incident reporting systems) to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by May 1, 2018.
- Directs the OSPI to contract with a vendor to make available to public schools an incident reporting system via a mobile application that includes specific features.
- Names the incident reporting system the Students Protecting Students (SPS) program.
- Requires school districts to submit a SPS program implementation plan to the OSPI if the district anticipates it will be unable to implement the program in the 2019-20 school year.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Steele, Stokesbary and Valdez.

Staff: Katie Choate (786-7296) and Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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.

Background:

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Responsibilities.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matter pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and its office (OSPI) has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- reporting to the Governor and the Legislature such information and data as may be required for the management and improvement of the schools;
- holding annual school safety summits to establish and monitor the progress of a statewide plan for funding cost-effective methods for school safety that meet local needs;
- developing or coordinating programs in use by public schools, such as a video telecommunications program; and
- providing technical assistance to school districts.

Incident Alert and Reporting Systems.

Some school districts have elected to use incident alert and reporting systems (incident reporting system). Although different incident reporting systems are available, these systems generally track incidents in one centralized system. With an incident reporting system, each potentially harmful tip sent by a student is immediately logged as an alert and the appropriate staff member is notified. System administrators can review and follow up on these reports, as well as monitor safety trends by victim, offender, and incident type. Some incident reporting systems allow students, staff, and parents to submit safety concerns to the administration by phone, text, email, or through the web.

School Safety.

In Washington all public schools and school districts must have up to date Safe School Plans and procedures in place. The School Safety Center, within the OSPI, provides resources to help in the development of high-quality emergency operations and safety plans. The website of the School Safety Center has information about bullying and harassment, gang activity in schools, and crisis resources, among other topics.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

School districts must report on their use of, or barriers to use of, any incident reporting system they employ to the OSPI by May 1, 2018. The OSPI must compile this information and report it to the Legislature by June 1, 2018.

The OSPI must contract with a vendor to make available to public schools an incident reporting system that includes the following features:

- availability as a mobile application;
- fast, secure, and anonymous reporting by students to school administrators of activities or the threat of activities that are inappropriate, unsafe, harmful, dangerous, unethical, or illegal;

- two-way messaging;
- the ability to include text, image, and video in reports and messages;
- the ability to designate school administrators to receive and respond to reports; and
- protection of the privacy of student data, consistent with federal and state laws.

The selected vendor must update the reporting system as new technology is available. The name of the reporting system must be the Students Protecting Students (SPS) program.

If a district anticipates that it will be unable to implement the SPS program in its middle and high schools in the 2019-20 school year, the district must submit a SPS program implementation plan to the OSPI.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill strikes all provisions of the underlying bill and instead requires school districts to report on their use of any reporting system to the OSPI by May 1, 2018.

The substitute bill also requires the OSPI to contract with a vendor to make available a reporting system via a mobile application. It also requires a district to submit a SPS program implementation plan to the OSPI if the district anticipates that it will be unable to implement the program in its middle and high schools in the 2019-20 school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 31, 2018.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Rather than an email or text-based incident alert and reporting system, this bill calls for a mobile application. If something is posted by a student that is unsafe, harmful, dangerous, unethical, or illegal, another student can take a photo of the incident and report it immediately to an administrator. Research shows that similar incident and reporting mobile application programs have reduced school shootings, reduced cyberbullying and in-person bullying, and have saved the school districts money. The state and schools can save money to save lives.

Principals are curious and intrigued about incident reporting systems, and they know that students who see something potentially harmful or dangerous should say something. Supporters would also like to see a pilot for the incident alert and reporting system proposed in the bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Manweller, prime sponsor; Dave Mastin, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.