

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6148

As of February 8, 2018

Title: An act relating to achieving equitable educational outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Brief Description: Creating a work group on educational equity for homeless children and youth.

Sponsors: Senators Palumbo, Ranker, Saldaña, Darneille, Keiser, Wellman, Lias, Zeiger, Hunt and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/29/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs certain state agencies to convene a workgroup with aligned nongovernmental agencies to create a plan for children and youth experiencing homelessness to achieve educational equity with their general student population peers.
- Tasks the workgroup with addressing certain topics and submitting a report to the Legislature by December 17, 2018.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Homeless Students. State law includes definitions for homeless students and homeless youth as those without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. That act provides federal grant funding to support school districts with serving homeless students. School districts are required to designate a homeless student education liaison.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This state agency designates a statewide Education of Homeless Children and Youth coordinator to review policies and create procedures, including dispute resolution procedures, to ensure that homeless children and youth are able to attend school.

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.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). In 2017, the Legislature created DCYF. On July 1, 2018, child welfare programs from the Children's Administration within DSHS and early learning programs from the Department of Early Learning (DEL) will move to DCYF.

Department of Commerce (Commerce). In 2015, the Legislature created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs within Commerce. This office is responsible for leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of ongoing and future funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth and improving the safety, health, and welfare of homeless youth in this state. By November 1, 2018, DCYF must provide a report to the Governor and Legislature that includes recommendations as to whether this office should be integrated into DCYF.

Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). This council provides strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The agency's responsibilities include administration of student financial assistance programs and student outreach.

Summary of Bill: DCYF, OSPI, Commerce, and WSAC must convene a workgroup with aligned nongovernmental agencies to collaborate on creating a plan for children and youth experiencing homelessness to achieve educational equity with their general student population peers and close the disparities between racial and ethnic groups by 2027.

The workgroup must:

- review certain educational outcomes of children and youth experiencing homelessness;
- consider the outcomes, needs, and services for children and youth experiencing homelessness, including children and youth of color and those with special education needs;
- map the current education support services;
- engage certain stakeholders to participate in analyzing and developing recommendations;
- make certain recommendations for optimal continuum of education support services to homeless children and youth from prekindergarten to postsecondary; and
- outline which recommendations can be achieved through existing resources and regulations, and which require policy, administrative, and resource adjustments.

The workgroup must provide a report to the Legislature by December 17, 2018, on the analysis, recommended plan, and legislative and administrative changes needed to achieve educational equity for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Homelessness can have an impact on students' education and the rest of their lives. Homelessness presents unique barriers and struggles for students, which creates massive disparities in educational outcomes. This bill will help achieve equity for students regardless of their background. Homeless children and youth need to be on the work group, so they can bring their opinions and inform the recommendations that will impact them. Students who are homeless need to have access to support and extracurricular activities, and they may be too scared to ask for help. This bill should be combined with the bill that creates a work group focused on children and youth in foster care. One of the recommendations that the work group is tasked with reviewing is the option of creating a specific statewide school district that supports homeless students. Creating a specific statewide school district could potentially violate McKinney-Vento, which prevents the segregation of homeless students from other students. This bill has a bold vision for achieving educational equity and will help create a seamless system that supports homeless students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jenna Yuan, Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Andrew Shin, Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Katara Jordan, Building Changes; Dakho Abdullahi, citizen; Rachelle Sharpe, WSAC; Carrie McKenzie, Washington State PTA.

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