

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2077

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to the placement of human trafficking informational posters in rest areas.

Brief Description: Concerning the placement of human trafficking informational posters in rest areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Griffey, Orwall, Rude, Simmons, Taylor, Davis, Klippert, Leavitt, Berg, Senn, Wicks, Kraft, Dent, Santos, Mosbrucker, Morgan, Paul, Chambers, Jacobsen, Robertson, Pollet and Sutherland.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/31/22, 2/7/22 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in consultation with human trafficking victim advocates, to determine content for informational posters to place in safety rest areas.
- Requires the WSDOT to install the informational posters in every restroom at every safety rest area by December 31, 2022.
- Requires the WSDOT to report on the status of the poster installations to the transportation committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2023.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Wylie, 1st Vice Chair; Bronoske, 2nd Vice Chair; Ramos, 2nd Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Robertson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz,

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Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berry, Chapman, Dent, Donaghy, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Griffey, Hackney, Klicker, Orcutt, Paul, Ramel, Riccelli, Slatter, Sutherland, Taylor, Valdez, Walsh and Wicks.

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142).

Background:

Human Trafficking. Human trafficking is a federal crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex. Human trafficking as sex trafficking occurs when a commercial sex act is induced by force, coercion, or when the person induced to perform the act is a minor. Human trafficking also occurs when a person is recruited, transported, harbored, or obtained for labor or service through the use of force, fraud, or coercion to subject that person to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, or slavery.

Safety Rest Areas. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns and operates 47 safety rest areas across the state, most open to the public 24 hours a day. Features of the safety rest areas include parking, Americans with Disabilities Act–accessible restrooms, drinking water, traveler information, vending machines, picnic areas, public telephones, and more. The WSDOT estimates more than 23 million visitors used the state's safety rest areas in 2020.

Human Trafficking Informational Posters. In 2010 Senate Bill 6330 was enacted that allows the WSDOT to work with human trafficking victim advocates to develop informational posters for placement in restrooms in safety rest areas. The WSDOT may adopt policies on the placement of these posters and the posters may be printed in a variety of languages. If the WSDOT produces the informational posters, the toll-free telephone numbers for the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and the Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy must be included on the posters.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Human Trafficking Informational Posters. The WSDOT must consult with human trafficking victim advocates to determine content for informational posters to be placed in restrooms in safety rest areas. The bill directs the WSDOT to adopt policies for the placement of the informational posters. The informational posters must be printed in a variety of languages, be made of durable material, and be permanently affixed. The WSDOT must install the informational posters in every restroom at every safety rest area by December 31, 2022.

Poster Maintenance and Reporting Requirements. Beginning January 1, 2023, or one month after poster installation, whichever is sooner, the WSDOT must inspect the posters monthly to ensure they are in fair condition and legible. The WSDOT must report the status

of the informational poster installations to the transportation committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2023. The report must include the number of posters installed, the location of the poster installations, and the completion date of the installations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill allows the WSDOT to use language already developed by human trafficking victim advocates for informational posters on human trafficking without having to develop new language. The requirement to include a description of human trafficking activities on the posters is removed in the substitute bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Slavery is real and Washington has become a hub for human trafficking. This bill combats human trafficking and will save lives and help people escape bondage. Installing informational posters in safety rest area restrooms is a common practice in the states surrounding Washington and installing posters in Washington safety rest areas would make Washington rest areas align with other states that will help mitigate human trafficking.

A few small amendments would strengthen the law and add another layer of integrity to the growing network of people escaping slavery through highways and roads that cross Washington. Consider removing the requirement to include descriptions of human trafficking activity for practical purposes as providing information in several languages already takes a lot of space on the posters. Also, change the words "must develop" to "shall determine" so that the WSDOT can use simple and direct language already developed by survivor-led and survivor-owned campaigns to end human trafficking. The language that has already been developed speaks directly to victims of human trafficking who often don't self-identify as such.

Providing information and contact information with phone numbers will allow people who are trafficked to memorize those numbers so they can call those numbers and get help when they get a rare free moment. This bill brings an opportunity to provide rescue and restoration to human trafficking victims.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dan Griffey, prime sponsor; Timothy Heffer, The Justice and Mercy Foundation; and Kevin Connelly and Chiyedza Mvundura, Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.