

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6722

As Passed Senate, February 11, 2000

Title: An act relating to unfounded reports of child abuse or neglect.

Brief Description: Restricting disclosure of unfounded allegations of child abuse and neglect.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove, Snyder, Stevens, Rasmussen and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/3/2000, 2/4/2000 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/11/2000, 44-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6722 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Patterson and Stevens.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: There have been a number of employees of state institutions who have been investigated by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) because of an allegation of abuse or neglect lodged against them by a resident of that institution. This has been particularly problematic in Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration institutions. In some cases, although the allegations were unfounded, the fact that they were maintained on the information system caused future problems for these employees.

Summary of Bill: DSHS is prohibited from releasing an unfounded allegation of child abuse or neglect to a child placing agency, a private adoption agency or any other licensed provider.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Keeping this information confidential protects those people who have been investigated and found to have done nothing wrong. No real difference between an unfounded- and false- allegation of abuse or neglect.

Testimony Against: Creating a category of false reports will be confusing. Immediate purging of a record destroys DSHS's business record. Does not allow DSHS to see pattern of referrals.

Testified: PRO: Scott McCleum, Naselle Youth Counselor; CONCERNS: Seth Dawson, Common Ground for Children; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; Suzanne Brown, WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Providers; CON: Jake Romo, DSHS.