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Governor



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To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have approved, except for Sections 1, 14 and 19, Second Substitute House Bill 2106 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to improving child welfare outcomes through the phased implementation of strategic and proven reforms."

Section 1 of the bill is an intent section and includes a sentence that says "It is the duty of the state to provide children at risk of out-of-home placement and their families with reasonable opportunities to access supportive services that enhance their safety and well-being." The bill does not define the term "children at risk of out-of-home placement," but does define "child welfare services" broadly. This section may be interpreted as creating a broad new entitlement that I do not believe was intended.

Section 14 amends RCW 74.15.030 to specify that unfounded allegations of child abuse or neglect shall be disclosed to supervising agencies. This language is in direct conflict with existing statutory language in RCW 26.44.031(4) which specifies that an unfounded, screened-out, or inconclusive report may not be disclosed to any licensed provider.

Section 19 directs the Department of Social and Health Services (Department) to, "within existing resources...develop a curriculum to train child protective services staff in forensic techniques used for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect." The Department cannot absorb costs associated with unfunded new activities at this time. I agree with the goal of ensuring the quality of our investigations and the local investigation protocols involving the Department, law enforcement and prosecutors are an existing mechanism that can be used to further this goal.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Sections 1, 14 and 19 of Second Substitute House Bill 2106.

With the exception of sections 1, 14 and 19, Second Substitute House Bill 2106 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/
Christine O. Gregoire
Governor