

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1512

As Reported by House Committee On:
Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to providing tools and resources for the location and recovery of missing persons.

Brief Description: Providing tools and resources for the location and recovery of missing persons.

Sponsors: Representatives Mosbrucker, Orwall, Simmons, Jacobsen, Leavitt, Rule, Gregerson, Eslick, Graham, Doglio, Reed and Morgan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry: 2/7/23, 2/13/23 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/20/23, 2/23/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Attorney General to publish and maintain a Missing Persons Toolkit that contains regularly updated information related to locating and recovering missing persons.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY, JUSTICE, & REENTRY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Simmons, Vice Chair; Mosbrucker, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Davis, Farivar, Fosse, Graham and Ramos.

Staff: Corey Patton (786-7388).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2004 the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) convened the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Task Force, which developed and published a toolkit containing information and resources related to the process of reporting a missing person. The AGO last updated the toolkit in 2007.

In 2022 the state established the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force (MMIWP Task Force) in the AGO and directed the MMIWP Task Force to review the laws and policies pertaining to missing and murdered Indigenous people and develop related recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

Summary of Bill:

The Office of the Attorney General (AGO) must, subject to appropriation, publish and maintain a Missing Persons Toolkit (Toolkit) that contains regularly updated information related to locating and recovering missing persons. The Toolkit must contain information and resources to help understand and engage with the process of reporting missing persons including, at minimum, the following:

- an explanation of how to report a missing person to an applicable law enforcement agency or other entity charged with receiving such reports;
- an overview of the kinds of information that may be helpful to provide when reporting a missing person;
- additional steps that may be taken to assist with recovering a missing person after a report has been made;
- suggestions and resources for navigating difficulties that are commonly encountered during the process of reporting and recovering a missing person, including a list of resources that may offer counseling and assistance to family members, friends, and community members of missing persons;
- information, developed in consultation with the AGO's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force, that is specifically tailored to reporting and recovering missing Indigenous women and persons; and
- information that is specifically tailored to reporting and recovering missing persons who are particularly vulnerable due to age, health, or mental or physical disability or condition.

The AGO must publish the Toolkit in the top 10 languages spoken in the state, in the following formats:

- a full digital version available on the AGO's website; and
- an abbreviated hard copy version made available to law enforcement agencies and any other relevant entities identified by the AGO, to be distributed by the applicable law enforcement agency or other entity when a person seeks to report a missing person.

The AGO must publish the first version of the Toolkit in both formats by November 1,

2023, and beginning in 2024, the AGO must review the Toolkit annually and publish an updated version incorporating any relevant changes by November 1 of each year thereafter.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is named in memory of a young boy who was lost in Yakima. The Missing Persons Toolkit (Toolkit) will be an important resource that anyone can use when someone goes missing. It will direct users on how to file a missing person report and access various related services. In developing this bill, several tribes were surveyed about what happens when children in their communities go missing. Responses varied greatly, with some tribes indicating that they only work with tribal police or local communities, while others indicated that they work with cross-jurisdictional agencies. Communities need consistent and detailed guidance on reporting missing persons. To be a comprehensive resource, the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) should coordinate with each tribal government and police department in the state to ensure that the Toolkit fulfills its purpose.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Although the Toolkit is a good idea, the AGO is not a law enforcement agency responsible for missing person investigations and is not the best-equipped entity for constructing the Toolkit. A law enforcement entity, such as the Washington State Patrol, should put together the Toolkit instead.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Gina Mosbrucker, prime sponsor; Charlene Tillequots, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation; and Kam Sihota, Kam-Way Transportation and Dedicated.

(Other) James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant

Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Chandler, Chopp, Connors, Couture, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stonier and Tharinger.

Staff: Jessica Van Horne (786-7288).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill comes from a recommendation made by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force. The toolkits proposed by the bill will help address the MMIWP issue. It also stems from an incident in which a child went missing in the Yakima Valley and was recently found deceased. During the search and rescue process, it became clear that there were not adequate tools to provide support for the family of the missing child. There is a lack of uniform processes and tools throughout the state. The last time the Missing Persons Toolkit was updated by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) was in 2007. The current toolkit is now out of date. The MMIWP Task Force supports keeping the duty to create and update the toolkit within the AGO, as they have an existing framework and are best positioned to maintain the toolkit.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Law enforcement appreciates the many recent legislative efforts dedicated to addressing missing persons. The AGO is not the appropriate entity to maintain the toolkit, as it is not a law enforcement agency. The Washington State Patrol is preferred to host the toolkit and provide guidance to law enforcement agencies. This will avoid duplication of efforts and streamline expertise and funding.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Gina Mosbrucker, prime sponsor.

(Other) Taylor Gardner, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.