

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6186

As Passed Senate, February 6, 2024

Title: An act relating to disclosure of recipient information to the Washington state patrol for purposes of locating missing and murdered indigenous women and other missing and murdered indigenous persons.

Brief Description: Concerning disclosure of certain recipient information to the Washington state patrol.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Valdez and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 1/22/24, 1/25/24 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/6/24, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Care Authority to disclose to a law enforcement officer from a state, local or tribal law enforcement agency, in response to that officer's written request, whether the recipient has accessed his or her public assistance benefits in the last 30 days for the purpose of assisting the officer in confirming whether the recipient is alive, if the recipient is the subject of a missing person's report.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6186 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Member; Frame, Nguyen, Warnick and Wilson, J..

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.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Created in 2021, and further expanded by the Legislature in 2023, the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force (MMIWP), administered by the Washington State Attorney General’s Office, to understand and address the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous people, is charged with reviewing laws and policies related to MMIWP, including:

- assessing the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous people, including historical, social, economic, and institutional factors;
- identifying ways to improve coordination between federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and tribes;
- assessing data tracking and reporting practices related to violence against Indigenous people;
- recommending improvements for collection and reporting of data by tribal, local, and state law enforcement to more effectively understand and reduce violence against Indigenous people;
- establishing best practices for improving jurisdictional and data sharing issues on tribal land and urban areas that impact violence against Indigenous people;
- reviewing prosecutorial trends and practices related to violence against Indigenous people in Washington;
- identifying barriers to providing more state resources to tracking cases of violence against Indigenous people;
- identifying barriers to reducing the incidence of violence against Indigenous people;
- assessing and identifying state resources to support programs and services for people impacted by MMIWP and tribal and urban Indian service providers working with Indigenous people who have experienced violence; and
- identifying and recommending increased state resources for trainings for law enforcement agencies on culturally attuned best practices for working with Indigenous people and communities.

MMIWP provided a status report including initial findings, recommendations and progress updates to the Governor and Legislature on August 1, 2022. Further updates were provided on December 1, 2023. A final report is due by June 1, 2025.

In addition to full MMIWP meetings and the Executive Committee, five subcommittees of the MMIWP met regularly in 2023: MMIWP Families, Tribes, Data and Research, Criminal Justice and Public Safety, and Community Services and Resources. MMIWP also seeks community participation through family talking circles and public comment sessions.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: To the extent allowed under federal law, upon written request of a law enforcement officer from a state, local, or tribal law enforcement agency, the Department of Social and Health Services or the Health Care Authority shall disclose to the law enforcement officer whether the recipient has accessed his or her public assistance benefits in the last 30 days for the purpose of assisting the officer in confirming whether the

recipient is alive if the recipient is the subject of a missing person's report.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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 on First Substitute: PRO: Behind every missing person is a family. By streamlining communication between DSHS, the HCA and law enforcement, we empower law enforcement to act efficiently. This amended bill amends what information is disclosed, not the location or address of the missing person to respect the privacy of the missing person, while still helping the family. Finding a missing person can be a long and tedious process- they could be a victim of a violent crime. Being a missing person is not a crime but public safety is the duty of law enforcement. The reporting party will not be alerted if the missing person doesn't want to be located. Indigenous people go missing at a disproportionately higher rate than others.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claudia Kauffman, Prime Sponsor; Dawn Pullin, Washington State Patrol; Barbara Serrano, Office of the Governor.

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