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Governor



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April 1, 2008

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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval as to Sections 1, 3, 4 and 6, Substitute House Bill 2679 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to improving educational outcomes for students in foster care."

This bill relates to projects to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care.

Section 1 creates a foster care program supervisor at the Puget Sound Educational Service District.

Section 3 directs the Puget Sound Educational Service District to create a grant program for school districts to improve stability and educational outcomes for students in foster care.

Section 4 directs the Children's Administration to fund two school district-based foster care recruitment pilots.

While it is important to provide services to students in foster care, these services should be informed by effective practice and formulated in a coordinated manner. In 2007, the Legislature created the Building Bridges grant program (HB 1573) which funds partnerships of schools, families, and communities to build a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval system. These grants will serve at-risk middle and high school students; targeted student populations include youth in foster care. The Children's Administration, in the Department of Social and Health Services, currently has educational advocacy coordinators. In addition, the supplemental budget enhances funding for the Children's Administration to provide Child Health Education and Tracking (CHET) screenings for all children who are in out-of-home care for 30 days or longer. Before new pilot programs are initiated, we need to evaluate the effectiveness of current programs and consider the best approach to coordinating services.

Substitute House Bill 2679

April 1, 2008

Page 2

Section 6 of Substitute House Bill 2679 makes the act null and void if specific funding for this act is not provided in the omnibus appropriations act. The funding in the budget was specifically for Sections 1, 3, and 4. To retain the policies in Sections 2 and 5, this null and void section must be vetoed.

For these reasons, I am vetoing Sections 1, 3, 4, and 6 of Substitute House Bill 2679.

With the exception of Sections 1, 3, 4, and 6, Substitute House Bill 2679 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor