

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1608

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**As Reported By House Committee On:**  
Children & Family Services

**Title:** An act relating to parental discipline.

**Brief Description:** Defining parental discipline.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Backlund, Cooke, Stevens, Lambert, Sherstad, Carrell, Hargrove, Mulliken, Hymes, Chappell, Crouse, L. Thomas and Smith.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children & Family Services: 2/17/95, 2/24/95 [DPS].

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Lambert, Vice Chairman; Stevens, Vice Chairman; Boldt; Buck; Carrell and Padden.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Thibaudeau, Ranking Minority Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Patterson and Tokuda.

**Staff:** David Knutson (786-7146).

**Background:** Current child abuse statutes allow parents to use reasonable parental discipline, including corporal punishment, when disciplining their children. Reasonable parental discipline is not defined in statute.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Reasonable parental discipline is defined to include spanking in the region of the buttocks which does not cause greater than transient pain, minor temporary marks, or superficial bruising. Reasonable and moderate physical discipline by a parent is defined in the same manner.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The definition of reasonable parental discipline is changed from spanking in the region of the buttocks so as not to leave a medically significant injury to transient pain, minor temporary marks, or superficial

bruising. The same definition is used in the criminal statutes to define reasonable and moderate physical discipline by a parent.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not Requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Current law allows parents to spank their children. There is no definition of "reasonable parental discipline" as it relates to an appropriate level of pain or harm caused by spanking.

**Testimony Against:** Other forms of parental discipline are more appropriate and effective than spanking. Spanking tells children that hitting is an appropriate method of resolving disputes.

**Testified:** Representative Jim Backlund, prime sponsor; David Geddis, citizen (pro); Joseph Pyott, citizen (pro); Janet Adams, Washington Assembly for Citizens with Disabilities (con); Bonnie Riach, Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse (con); Dale and Shannon Altona (pro); Lydia Smith (pro); and Dick Anderson, Department of Social and Health Services (con).