



Family Court and Domestic Violence

Senate Bill 5858 – Equitable Property Distribution to Prevent Women & Child Homelessness

Under this bill, the courts would be required to consider certain factors when distributing property during a divorce. Significant financial burdens arise because of selling a home during a divorce and too often women and children become homeless.

Courts are already required to make a “just and equitable” distribution of assets and liabilities after considering an existing list of factors. SB 5858 adds that the courts must consider the costs of selling property like taxes and fees or needed repairs. Concerning a family’s primary residence, the court would be required to look at:

- The potential of a parent and child becoming homeless;
- The cost to help get new housing if that occurs; and
- The price for which the home could be sold.

Senate Bill 5859 – Family Court Study

We need a thorough study of our courts to see if our current system is working well for families, especially those exposed to domestic violence.

This proposal would look at the effectiveness of the family courts, including the impacts of using separate judges to determine parenting plans, property distribution, personnel, and procedural and training costs. The Administrative Office of the Courts would be required to deliver a report to the Legislature by July 2025.

Senate Bill 5861 – Survivors and Families Empowerment Act

This is a comprehensive bill that includes impactful reforms to evidence rules, enforcement of child support, and training for those working in the system to support victims.

The proposal includes provisions that:

- Preserve evidence for the safety of women and children (one-party recording consent by victims of domestic violence);
- Provide better enforcement and improve fairness and financial stability (Presumption of means to comply with support orders and modifications for contempt);
- Establish rigorous training standards; and
- Make it easier to obtain child support.





Senate Bill 5863 – Credit Reporting Fairness

This bill would prohibit unfair reporting of debts incurred during a dissolution. If individual or joint accounts are determined to be the responsibility of a different party during a divorce and accounts are in collections, they cannot be reported.

Senate Bill 5865 – Child Custody and Misconduct

The state's family courts have certain requirements to consider in various cases, but misconduct in the context of child custody is ill-defined. This would change state law to include a history of domestic violence against their partners in the definition of misconduct.

Senate Bill 5868 – Family Court and Domestic Violence Training

Courts would be required to update the family-law handbook to empower families going through the divorce process and protect victims of domestic abuse. The handbook hasn't been updated since 2015. If adopted, this law requires annual updates and that the book be given to those in the family law system that includes;

- Information on reporting domestic violence;
- Information on property rights;
- Information on the effects of dissolution on children, and more.

Senate Bill 5879 – Kayden's Law

This legislation follows guidance from Congress and will bring to the state needed federal resources to properly train family-court judges to better recognize abuse, limit unsafe unproven "reunification" treatments and make survivors of abuse safer.

It creates standards that put children's safety first and establishes stronger safeguards against abuse.

Washington needs to pass this law now to give safe parents and children in the family courts a fighting chance against abusers and to empower judges with helpful tools. In addition, our state would be eligible for federal funding to accomplish these goals.

