

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESCR 8423

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Housing*

Brief Description: Creating a committee for affordable farmworker housing.

Sponsor(s): Senators Barr and Conner.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Housing, February 27, 1992, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HOUSING**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Nelson, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Mitchell, Ranking Minority Member; Winsley, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballard; Leonard; Ogden; and Wineberry.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background: In 1988, the state Board of Health issued a statewide report on the status of farmworkers in 1986. The report estimated that the state's migrant and seasonal farmworker population, excluding dependents, was 55,000 individuals. About 50 percent of this population consisted of farmworkers that lived beyond normal commuting distances from the area where they worked.

Concern has been expressed regarding the need for farmworker housing within the state. In 1986, the number of grower-provided housing units for farmworkers was estimated at 4,400. The demand for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, during this same period, exceeded 25,000 units.

The imposition of state building code requirements on housing that is occupied on a seasonal basis has been cited as a hinderance to the development or rehabilitation of additional farmworker housing. In 1990, the Legislature responded to those concerns by directing the Department of Community Development to develop model plans for seasonal, mixed-use housing, and year-round farmworker housing.

While the model plans have been developed, concern has been expressed that state building and energy code requirements that are designed for housing that is occupied on a year-round basis are excessive and add costs to housing that is occupied on a seasonal basis.

Summary of Amended Bill: A committee for affordable farmworker housing is created and is composed of 15 voting members. The members include: (a) one member from each caucus in the Senate; (b) one member from each caucus in the House of Representatives; (c) the chair of the State Building Code Council or his or her designee; (d) two representatives of the agricultural community; (e) two farmworker representatives; (f) two representatives of the building industry; (g) a representative of the architecture and design professionals; (h) a representative of private nonprofit farmworker housing organizations; (i) a representative of the cities; and (j) a representative of the counties.

A committee also includes six advisory, nonvoting members that consist of: (a) the director of the Department of Community Development, or his or her designee; (b) the director of the Department of Labor and Industries, or his or her designee; (c) the secretary of Health, or his or her designee; (d) a member of the state Board of Health, appointed by the chair of the state Board of Health; (e) the commissioner of the Employment Security Department, or his or her designee; and (f) the director of the State Energy Office, or his or her designee.

The committee is to explore: (1) all aspects of the costs associated with constructing farmworker housing and is to find methods of reducing the costs of constructing such housing by any available means while maintaining adequate health and safety standards; and (2) financing techniques for the construction or rehabilitation of seasonally or year-round occupied farmworker housing.

The committee is to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 31, 1992. The committee is terminated on January 10, 1993.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: The amended bill: (1) adds the commissioner of the Employment Security Department as a non-voting member of the advisory committee; (2) directs the committee on affordable farmworker housing to explore financing techniques for the construction or rehabilitation of seasonally or year-round occupied housing; and (3) removes specific reference to the Bonneville Power Administration as a source of technical assistance to the committee.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: There is a need for housing that is occupied for short periods during the harvest season. The demand for seasonally occupied housing is growing. The problem is that the current building and energy codes are for housing that is occupied on a year-round basis. To build or repair seasonally occupied housing under the existing building and energy codes is cost-prohibitive. This resolution will allow all agencies and interested parties time to work on this issue and report back to the Legislature with solutions to this problem.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Barr, sponsor (pro); John Thayer, State Board of Health (pro); Mari Eichner, state Building Code Council (pro); Mike McCourt, Association of Washington Cities (pro); and Frank Chestnut, Department of Health (pro).