

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5767

As Passed House - Amended:

April 7, 2005

Title: An act relating to developing plans to address the housing needs of homeless persons.

Brief Description: Developing plans to address the housing needs of homeless persons.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Financial Institutions, Housing & Consumer Protection (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Haugen, Keiser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Franklin, Shin, Berkey and Hargrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing: 3/22/05, 3/24/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/7/05, 58-38.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

Requires each county to create a homeless housing task force to develop a 10-year plan to address short- and long-term housing for homeless persons and to develop guidelines for homeless housing programs and developments. A county may work in concert with another county to develop and execute a plan, may contract with another entity to do so, or may decline to participate in this.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Miloscia, Chair; Springer, Vice Chair; Ormsby, Pettigrew and Sells.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Dunn, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCune and Schindler.

Staff: Robyn Dupuis (786-7166).

Background:

There exists a variety of local efforts addressing issues related to homelessness, however there currently exists no formal coordination at the state level, nor are there any formal state requirements of local governments related to their efforts to address homelessness within their

boundaries. Current state law does not require local governments to develop a plan for ending homelessness.

Summary of Amended Bill:

All counties must create a homeless housing task force to develop a 10-year plan addressing short- and long-term housing for the homeless. Task forces may include representatives of community businesses and residents, social and health care services, law enforcement, schools, civic and faith organizations, housing authorities, and homeless or former homeless individuals. Counties that already have an existing group focused on homelessness are not required to create a new task force.

In addition to the development of a 10-year plan to end homelessness, the task force is charged with the establishment of guidelines, including standards for health and safety, as well as for public notification of proposed facilities, for shelters, encampments, long-term housing and other housing programs and developments for the homeless population.

Counties may work together to develop and execute joint homeless housing plans or may contract with another entity to do so. The county will, however, retain ultimate responsibility for the homeless housing program within its borders. A county may also decline to participate in the program by forwarding a resolution stating its intention to DCTED. In such cases, DCTED will create and execute a local homeless housing plan for the county.

Each county must report to DCTED with information regarding their activities to comply with this act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill sets the all important goal of ending homelessness, and just as importantly, it asserts that this is an achievable goal. Homelessness is a serious social problem. There were 51,000 people sheltered in Washington (possible duplicated count) and 168,000 incidents of people being turned away from shelters last year. These numbers only take into account state-supported shelters, not the many churches and other private providers that offer shelter to the homeless, nor do the numbers take into account the many people living outdoors because they have given up on the shelter system. Bringing people together to form task forces is a critical step to addressing our homeless problem. There is no fiscal impact of this bill, therefore it is not an unfunded mandate.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Ruth Shearer, Bread & Roses Homeless Services; and Seth Dawson, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.