
Public Safety Committee

ESB 5105

Brief Description: Asserting conditions under which the department of corrections provides rental vouchers to an offender.

Sponsors: Senators Dammeier, Harper and Pearson.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to designate approved housing providers who can accept housing vouchers for offenders.
- Requires that the DOC limit the concentration of approved housing providers in a single neighborhood and work with local governments to develop a community impact statement before approving a provider.
- Creates a process for local governments to request removal of the housing provider from the list.
- Requires the DOC to verify that offenders who are using the vouchers in a home with four or more individuals are participating in programs or services.

Hearing Date: 3/20/13

Staff: Sarah Koster (786-7303).

Background:

Offenders committed to a correctional facility operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC) earn early release time for good behavior and good performance. The percentage of the sentence which can be earned varies depending on the circumstances of the offender's underlying offense and date of conviction. Offenders subject to community custody are under the supervision of the DOC upon release.

Before an offender may be released early from confinement to community custody, the DOC must approve the offender's release plan. The release plan includes the specific residence and

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living arrangements of the offender. The DOC can deny the offender's release plan if it determines that the plan places the community or specific victims at risk, if it violates the terms of supervision, or if it places the offender at risk to reoffend or violate the conditions of supervision.

The DOC can provide rental vouchers to the offender for a period of up to three months if the rental voucher will result in an approved release plan. The voucher must be provided in conjunction with additional transition support programming or services including, but not limited to, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, sex offender treatment, education programming, or employment programming.

Summary of Bill:

The DOC must maintain a list of housing providers that meets specifically outlined criteria. A rental voucher may only be paid to a housing provider on the list. The DOC must give preference to small, family-oriented living environments.

For providers with between four to eight beds, or a greater number if permitted by local code, the DOC must provide transition support that verifies an offender is participating in programming or services. The DOC must consider the compatibility of the housing with the surrounding neighborhood and underlying zoning and must limit the concentration of housing providers who provide housing to offenders in a single neighborhood or area.

Any time a new housing provider or location is added to the list of housing providers, the DOC must give notice to the city and county where the housing is located. The notice must include a community impact statement that is developed in collaboration with the county and city local governments. The impact statement must include the number and location of other special-needs housing in the neighborhood and a review of services and supports in the area to assist offenders in their transition. If the provider does not have a certificate of inspection as required by law and local regulation, the local government has 10 days to inspect the housing. If the local government determines that the housing is in a neighborhood with an existing concentration of special-needs housing, the local government may request that the housing provider be removed from the list within 10 days of receiving notice of the new provider.

Local government may request that a housing provider be removed from the list at any time if it finds the housing does not comply with state and local codes or zoning regulations or the provider is not complying with requirements. After receiving a request for removal, the DOC must immediately notify the housing provider. If the provider cannot demonstrate compliance with the reasons for the request for removal, the DOC must remove the provider from the list.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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