

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5402

As of February 4, 2013

Title: An act relating to allowing residents of total confinement facilities and secure community transition facilities to engage in therapeutic occupational assignments within the confines of McNeil Island.

Brief Description: Allowing residents of total confinement facilities and secure community transition facilities to engage in therapeutic occupational assignments within the confines of McNeil Island.

Sponsors: Senators Carrell and Pearson; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/22/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Joan Miller (786-7784)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) operates the Special Commitment Center (SCC) on McNeil Island to provide mental health treatment to civilly committed sexually violent predators after they have been released from criminal incarceration. The SCC includes both a total confinement facility and a secure community transition facility.

For approximately 30 years, the Department of Corrections (DOC) also operated a correctional facility on the island. During this time, inmates would perform required maintenance work around the island. In December 2010, state law mandated closure of the DOC facility. After the correctional facility was shut down in April 2011, all inmates were transferred to other institutions. DSHS has now assumed responsibility for daily management and maintenance of infrastructure necessary to support the SCC's operations. Currently, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) within DSHS performs some of the maintenance work on McNeil Island.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary of DSHS, or the Secretary's designee, is authorized to select residents from the SCC's total confinement facility and secure community transition facility to participate in therapeutic occupational assignments to provide a way for residents

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to learn valuable work skills and earn money to help in their transition into the community. These assignments may occur outside the perimeter of the total confinement facility or the secure community transition facility but must be within the confines of McNeil Island.

The Secretary or the Secretary's designee must determine the appropriate direct staffing ratio and impose conditions on the resident that are necessary to ensure the safety of the community.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2013.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: DSHS needs help in finding ways to cost effectively perform maintenance activities on McNeil Island. The current 1:1 ratio of staff to residents was determined when DOC had families and staff living in houses around the island. Currently, SCC residents are the only persons occupying the island. The 1:1 ratio makes it cost prohibitive because DSHS must pay the resident for the labor and the staff to monitor resident. Allowing a single staff person to monitor more than one resident would reduce the cost. SCC residents will gain needed vocational training and fiscal resources for their transition. Residents have difficulty supporting themselves when transitioning to the community and often end up homeless because they do not have employable skills. The partnership with JRA would not have to end, as there is enough work to be done on the island that could be shared by JRA and the SCC.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Don Gauntz, Interim CEO, DSHS Special Commitment Center.