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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2532**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** House Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Kilduff, Muri, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, McBride, Robinson, and Bergquist)

AN ACT Relating to studying public access to library services in local jurisdictions across Washington; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Public libraries play a unique role in American society as centers for learning and human interaction. Libraries help to educate people, support democracy by providing people with the tools to become informed citizens, and provide safe and welcoming places where people can explore and discuss ideas.

Furthermore, public libraries provide free, vital resources for early literacy development, including story times and parent education. Early literacy skills provide a solid foundation for academic performance by ensuring that children arrive at school ready to learn; public libraries thereby contribute positively to a child's ability to read at grade level. The legislature finds that students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. Public libraries are therefore a critical resource in promoting early and continuing academic success for youth in the common schools.

The legislature intends for a study to be completed to determine how many Washingtonians lack free membership to a public library and the potential fiscal impact of expanding access to all communities currently without free membership.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of commerce must conduct a study on library access in Washington. The study must:

(a) Identify each local jurisdiction in Washington that does not provide free library membership to its residents, either directly or through a contract with another library or library district, and is not annexed to a library district;

(b) Determine the number of Washingtonians who lack free membership to a public library;

(c) Determine the cost to each local jurisdiction of expanding free membership to:

(i) All residents; and

(ii) All residents under the age of eighteen;

(d) Examine the history of Washington elections in which funding for library service was proposed to voters and describe the election results; and

(e) Identify any private or philanthropic funding sources, existing state and federal grant programs and funding sources that could potentially support the provision of library services in small jurisdictions and low-income communities.

(2) The department of commerce must compile its findings in a written report and submit this report to the legislature and the governor by December 1, 2016.

(3) The department of commerce must conduct this study within existing resources.

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