

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5900

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Human Services, Mental Health & Housing, February 19, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to the hosting of the homeless by religious organizations.

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting certain limitations on the hosting of the homeless by religious organizations.

**Sponsors:** Senators Miloscia and Hasegawa.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/12/15, 2/19/15 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators O'Ban, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove and Padden.

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

**Background:** Temporary Encampments for the Homeless. Churches can host temporary encampments for the homeless on any real property owned or controlled by a church.

With respect to the efforts of a church to provide housing or shelter to homeless persons, counties, cities, and towns, are prohibited from the following:

- unreasonably interfering with the decisions or actions of a church regarding the location of housing or shelter for homeless persons on property the church owns or controls;
- unreasonably prohibiting or attempting to regulate the housing of homeless persons on church property based upon the property's proximity to a school or daycare center; or
- requiring a church to obtain insurance pertaining to the liability of a municipality with respect to homeless persons housed on church property or otherwise requiring the church to indemnify the municipality against such liability.

Safe Parking. The city of Seattle has a safe parking program known as the Road to Housing program. In 2013 it served 52 vehicular residents, and for the first half of 2014 the program

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worked with 91 vehicular residents. Safe parking sites also exist in other areas of King County.

**Summary of Bill:** With respect to the efforts of a church to provide housing or shelter to homeless persons, counties, cities, and towns, are prohibited from limiting a religious organization's:

1. availability to host a rotating, established tent encampment to less than eight months during any calendar year;
2. hosting term to less than four months unless agreed to by that religious organization for a specific instance; or
3. availability to host safe parking efforts at its own on-site parking lot, except for the following limitations that would govern if enacted by local ordinance:
  - a. no less than one space per 20 may be devoted to safe parking;
  - b. restroom access must be provided; and
  - c. if no managing agency oversees the safe parking, the host religious organization must act as managing agency to assure sex offender checks are completed, inform vehicle residents how to comply with laws regarding the legal status of vehicles and drivers, and provide a written code of conduct consistent with area standards.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**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: Churches have stepped in to provide temporary housing for the homeless. Since this bill first passed, homelessness has increased 37 percent. The right thing for faith communities to do is to help those in need, helping our most vulnerable. Seattle has its own rules governing these communities, other municipalities don't. Faith communities have the ability to assist with this overwhelming need.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Reverend Bill Kirlin-Hackett, Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness.