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**HOUSE BILL 2583**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Macri, Gregerson, Frame, Pollet, Dolan, Peterson, Appleton, Wylie, Cody, Tarleton, Robinson, Doglio, and Ormsby

AN ACT Relating to local authority to address affordable housing needs through regulation of rent and associated charges; creating a new section; and repealing RCW 35.21.830 and 36.01.130.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds as follows:

(a) There is a housing emergency throughout Washington state. Safe, accessible, and affordable housing is a cornerstone of a civil and humane society. Yet, because of steep rent costs, thousands of families throughout our state do not have access to this fundamental human necessity.

(b) Rents have increased sharply in Washington state in the last several years, not just in the Puget Sound corridor, but across the state. Meanwhile, wage increases have not kept up with rent increases, particularly for middle and lower wage earners.

(c) The prolonged renting crisis our state faces disproportionately impacts low-income and working class families, people of color, women, immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. Disproportionate rates of poverty exacerbate the renting crisis for these populations.

(d) High renting costs damage business prospects, especially for small businesses. The exorbitant cost of housing forces many workers to live far away from their jobs or to look elsewhere for work, threatening the vitality of Washington's leading industries. The more money renters spend on rent, the less money they can afford to spend on local businesses.

(e) Rising rents are connected to rising rates of homelessness. Studies find that a one hundred dollar rent increase is correlated with a rise in homelessness of between six and thirty-two percent. The rate of homelessness in rural, suburban, and urban communities throughout Washington will continue to skyrocket unless these communities are empowered to fully address this crisis.

(f) The rise in homelessness has also burdened local school districts who have been forced to deal with a sharp rise in homeless students. Homeless students numbered a little over twenty-six thousand in the 2010-11 school year; by the 2015-16 school year, the number of homeless students was almost forty thousand. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically, drop out of school, and have higher absentee rates. They score, on average, substantially lower on state tests. By negatively impacting educational outcomes, the rental and homelessness crises negatively impact local districts and the ability of districts to provide quality educational opportunities for students.

(g) Existing state law unduly restrains local governments from fully determining how to handle housing policies within their jurisdictions while, at the same time, Washington's housing and homelessness crises have disproportionately become the responsibility and burden of local governments.

(2) The legislature therefore intends to give cities, towns, and counties the freedom to address Washington's ongoing housing and homelessness crises by abolishing statewide bans on local laws that regulate rent.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The following acts or parts of acts are each repealed:

(1)RCW 35.21.830 (Controls on rent for residential structures—Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1981 c 75 s 1; and

(2)RCW 36.01.130 (Controls on rent for residential structures—Prohibited—Exceptions) and 1991 c 363 s 43 & 1981 c 75 s 2.

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