

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5077

As Passed House:
April 10, 2017

Title: An act relating to allowing the department of corrections to provide temporary housing assistance to individuals being released from certain corrections centers for women.

Brief Description: Allowing the department of corrections to provide temporary housing assistance to individuals being released from certain corrections centers for women.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Angel, Darneille, Padden, Wilson, Rolfes, Keiser, Mullet, Wellman, Conway and Saldaña).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 3/15/17, 3/16/17 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/10/17, 57-41.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Corrections to issue rental vouchers to support persons discharged from the Washington Corrections Center for Women and the Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Reeves and Sawyer.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives McCabe, Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jenkin.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Before transferring an offender from confinement into supervised community custody, the Department of Corrections (DOC) must approve the offender's release plan, including the proposed residence and living arrangements. The DOC may deny a release plan if the offender's proposed plan, including residence and living arrangements, place the offender at risk to reoffend, violate the conditions of the sentence or supervision, or present a risk to victim safety or community safety.

The DOC may provide rental vouchers to the offender for up to three months if such rental assistance will help in approving the offender's release plan. Such rental vouchers must be provided in conjunction with additional support services such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, and employment and educational programming. The DOC must maintain a list of housing providers that meet certain requirements for accepting rental vouchers. Rental vouchers may only be used to pay a housing provider on the DOC's list where more than two offenders receiving vouchers will be residing per dwelling unit.

Any convicted felon discharged from custody is entitled to retain any earnings from employment while incarcerated, and must be provided presentable clothes, \$40 for food, and up to \$100 for transportation. An additional \$60 may be provided for personal and living expenses based on request. Alternatively, the DOC may provide \$55 per week to a person released from confinement for six weeks, or until the person becomes employed. Such payments may be extended for an additional 20 weeks if the payments are assisting the person to actively seek employment.

Summary of Bill:

The DOC may provide rental vouchers for persons discharged from the Washington Corrections Center for Women and the Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (Women's Correction Centers), for up to three months, if such assistance will support the person's release into the community. The vouchers must be provided within existing resources of the DOC. Such rental vouchers are separate from the DOC's authority to issue rental vouchers for offenders in community custody.

The DOC authority to issue rental vouchers issued to persons discharged from the Women's Correction Centers expires at the end of 2020. By November 1, 2020, the DOC must report to the Legislature on the number of persons in the Women's Correction Centers who received rental vouchers, the ability of such persons to maintain housing at the end of the rental voucher period, and the recidivism rate of those persons who received vouchers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The transition from custody into the community poses risks for inmates, especially for those offenders that do not have families or support networks to go to when they are released from custody. Women are at a higher risk when released from custody without a place to live. This bill will provide emergency resources for women facing homelessness upon release from custody so that they can find safe and stable accommodations to help with the transition back into the community.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Angel, prime sponsor; and Devon Schrum, Department of Corrections.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.