

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2649

As Reported by House Committee On:
Housing, Community Development & Veterans

Title: An act relating to homeless shelter capacity.

Brief Description: Concerning homeless shelter capacity.

Sponsors: Representatives Ryu, Doglio, Lekanoff, Ormsby and Pollet; by request of Office of the Governor.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Community Development & Veterans: 1/28/20, 2/7/20 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires certain counties and cities to develop a list of parcels that are zoned, suitable, and potentially feasible for development of shelters, sanctioned camping, affordable housing for persons with disabilities, permanent supportive housing, and behavioral health facilities.
- Directs the Department of Commerce, in coordination with counties, cities, and local homeless housing task forces, to develop plans for addressing any unmet housing and sheltering needs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & VETERANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Frame, Johnson, J., Leavitt and Ramel.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Jenkin, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis.

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7150).

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.

State Homeless Housing Program.

The Homeless Housing and Assistance Act directs the Department of Commerce (Department) to develop a statewide homeless housing program and implement the program through a five-year strategic plan. As part of the plan, the Department manages a range of homeless assistance, prevention, and housing programs. The Department's programs include the Consolidated Homeless Grant Program, which provides grants for county governments and other designated entities for services to households who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Local Homeless Housing Plans.

Unless it chooses not to participate, each county must coordinate with its local homeless housing task force to develop a five-year homeless housing plan that is consistent with the statewide plan. A county may decline to participate by forwarding a resolution to the Department, in which case the Department will contract with a non-profit entity to develop and execute the county's plan. Regardless of whether a county chooses to participate, a city may assert responsibility for homeless housing within its borders by forwarding a resolution of intent and commitment to the county. A local homeless housing plan may include a broad range of activities to address homelessness, such as temporary rental assistance and development of affordable housing.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

As part of local homeless housing plans, counties with a population greater than 40,000, and cities located within those counties with a population greater than 15,000, must conduct a review of current zoning and development regulations and surplus public property within the jurisdiction. By December 1, 2021, counties and cities required to complete the review must submit a list of all parcels that are zoned, suitable, and potentially feasible for development of shelters, sanctioned camping, affordable housing for persons with disabilities, permanent supportive housing, and behavioral health facilities. For each parcel, counties and cities must identify the number of expected units or capacity for services, the type of facility that could be developed, and any populations that cannot be served on the parcel. Counties and cities must provide to the Department the list of parcels with an assessment of whether the number of parcels is sufficient to address certain regional housing needs. The Department may produce additional guidance and assist any county or city that is unable to complete the required review and report.

The Department must determine whether the total capacity zoned, suitable, and potentially feasible is adequate to meet regional housing needs. If the available parcels are not adequate to meet regional housing and sheltering needs, the Department must convene the cities, county, and local homeless housing task force to develop a plan for addressing the unmet needs and to provide a report to the Governor and Legislature on barriers to meeting housing goals. Shelter and housing gap analysis plans for addressing unmet needs must be completed by December 31, 2022. The plans must include: (1) an accounting of the law, policy, and resource changes that will be implemented by the city or county; and (2) recommendations to the state regarding the law, policy, and resource changes needed at the state level.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill required certain counties and cities to amend local homeless housing plans to expand shelter or sanctioned camping capacity to serve at least 50 percent of the homeless people living within the jurisdiction. The plans were required to include changes that would be implemented at the local level and changes needed at the state level.

The substitute bill requires certain counties and cities to develop a list of parcels that are zoned, suitable, and potentially feasible for development of shelters, sanctioned camping, affordable housing for persons with disabilities, permanent supportive housing, and behavioral health facilities. The substitute bill also directs the Department, in coordination with counties, cities, and local homeless housing task forces, to develop plans for addressing any unmet housing and sheltering needs.

The original bill redirected certain funds from the Homeless Housing and Assistance Surcharge (surcharge) due to a county or city without an amended local homeless housing plan to the Department. The Department would use the funds to contract with another entity or entities to execute a homeless sheltering plan in the county or city without an amended plan. The substitute bill does not make any changes to how the surcharge is distributed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Homelessness continues to be an issue throughout the state. Counties already are required to submit plans to address homeless and affordable housing, and they do a very good job at developing those plans and identifying unmet needs. This bill requires larger counties and cities to complete an additional plan. It is regional in focus and looks at what laws and policies need to be changed. This bill encourages greater collaboration between counties and cities in addressing regional needs and asks local jurisdictions to look at what laws and policies need to be changed. Property available for housing and homeless facilities needs to be identified. This is part of the Governor's broader homeless strategy. It is a work in progress, and local jurisdictions will need funding to complete the plans. The state and local jurisdictions can tackle this problem together.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) This is a particularly complex issue but a strong step forward. This effort would take a lot of energy and effort, and counties do not have the resources to do this work. The bill needs some refinement, including funding for the administrative costs for counties and the state.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Ryu, prime sponsor; James Baumgart, Office of the Governor; and Celia Jackson, King County.

(Other) Josh Weiss, Skagit County; Juliana Roe, Washington State Association of Counties; and Briahna Murray, Cities of Kent, Redmond, and Bellevue.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.