

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2579

As Passed Senate, March 6, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Brief Description: Establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Eslick, Klippert and Ormsby.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/20, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/20/20, 2/25/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/06/20, 48-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC), through Correctional Industries, to conduct a feasibility study and develop an implementation plan for a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.
- Requires DOC to submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by November 1, 2020.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Kelsey-anne Fung (786-7479)

Background: Correctional Industries. The Department of Corrections (DOC) provides work programs to persons incarcerated in its facilities through its Correctional Industries (CI) Division. According to DOC, the division's goal is to transform lives and increase successful reentry through training and mentoring by maintaining and expanding inmate work training

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programs which develop marketable job skills, instill and promote positive work ethics, and reduce the tax burden of corrections. CI operates businesses within all prison facilities throughout the state and employs approximately 2200 inmates. Some participants in CI work programs receive financial compensation for their work, while others are performed without financial compensation for the benefit of the community. DOC deducts taxes and legal financial obligations from any wages a person may earn in a work program.

Coyote Ridge Corrections Center. Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC) is a DOC minimum and medium custody level male prison located in Connell, Washington. Incarcerated individuals at CRCC may participate in several work and vocational programs including auto repair, building maintenance, groundkeepers, information technology, and welding. At CRCC, CI employs incarcerated individuals in their laundry operation, textiles factory, pillow and mattress factory, food factory and pheasant farm. The CRCC has an average daily population of 2500 incarcerated individuals.

Farrier Science Certificates. A farrier specializes in the care of equine hooves. The Walla Walla Community College recently stopped offering its farrier science certification program in June 2019 due to low enrollment. The program had been offered since 1974. To earn a farrier science certificate, a person focuses on understanding horse anatomy, disease, leg and hoof lameness, and therapeutic measures. Participants are prepared to improve or correct faulty gaits, treat feet disorders, and relieve pain to an injured leg or hoof. The program also prepared participants for the test administered by the American Farriers Association.

Arizona Wild Horse Program. The U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Arizona Department of Corrections, Correctional Industries partnered in 2012 to create the Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP), located at the Arizona State Prison Complex in Florence, Arizona. WHIP employs a staff of professional horse trainers who provide horsemanship, animal husbandry, and farrier skills and teach inmates how to gentle wild horses obtained from BLM. The facilities include a training center and a holding center where the public may adopt horses trained through WHIP.

Summary of Bill: DOC, through CI, must conduct a feasibility study and develop an implementation plan for a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at CRCC to assist incarcerated persons with developing occupational, vocational, and life skills. The program must be designed in partnership with the federal BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program.

DOC must consult with the federal BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program, state Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State University, Walla Walla Community College, and other appropriate state and federal agencies, local governments, and experts in the field of wild horse management and training.

Among other things, DOC must:

- evaluate and consult with similar programs in other states;
- develop design and construction options for holding and training facilities that consider the safety and welfare of incarcerated persons, staff, and the horses;
- determine the costs of establishing and maintaining operations, facilities, and staff to feed and care for the horses;

- evaluate the availability of land and water necessary to support the program, including adjacent public and private land;
- evaluate necessary steps to develop a partnership with Walla Walla Community College to offer a farrier certificate for qualifying participants; and
- consult with Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine to determine if students can practice care at the CRCC training and holding facilities.

DOC must submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by November 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: WHIPs in other states have had success with changing inmates' lives and reducing recidivism. People expected the horse training to be therapeutic for the inmates, but many were surprised with the extent of the rehabilitative impact on inmates. In the process of training the wild horses, the inmates not only bond with the animals but learn anger control, self-control, patience, delayed gratification, and work ethic. The farrier certificate program recently closed at Walla Walla Community College, which is a huge loss to the horse industry and region where there already is a farrier shortage in the state. Since Walla Walla Community College provides the vocational training programs for CRCC, this is an opportunity to reinstate the farrier certificate program in a prison setting where people can learn transferrable job skills in an easy to access, low entry costs industry.

Based on the Arizona Department of Corrections WHIP, there have been over 75 inmates that have gone through the program and only five individuals have reoffended and returned to prison. There is also a waiting list and high demand for trained horses from the Arizona program, often used for trail riding, ranches, competition, and U.S. Border Patrol. Inmates who have gone through WHIP must complete their GEDs before being released and often go on to work in the equestrian field and begin careers as basic veterinary technicians, farriers, trainers, and horse riders.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mary Dye, Prime Sponsor; Mike Hoover, citizen; Randy Helm, Arizona Wild Horse Inmate Program; Noel Vest, Stanford University of Medicine; Zachary Kinneman, citizen; Barbara Kinneman, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.