

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5441

As of February 20, 2019

Title: An act relating to rental vouchers to eligible offenders.

Brief Description: Extending rental vouchers for eligible offenders.

Sponsors: Senators Nguyen, Wilson, C., Darneille, Cleveland, Salomon, Randall, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 1/23/19 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/13/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the time from three months to six months for which the Department of Corrections may provide rental vouchers to offenders, if rental assistance will result in an approved release plan.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Keri Waterland (786-7490)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Travis Sugarman (786-7446)

Background: According to Hamilton, Kigerl, & Hays' 2013 report, *Removing Release Impediments and Reducing Correctional Costs: Evaluation of Washington State's Housing Voucher Program*, "homelessness is a persistent problem facing offenders returning to the community from prison. Many offenders were homeless prior to incarceration, and often return to homelessness after release."

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.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) Housing Voucher Program (HVP) is a reentry program that pays for returning offenders' rent expenses in private housing for up to three months following their release, in order to support offenders living in stable housing.

Summary of Bill: DOC may provide rental vouchers to releasing offenders for six months, as part of the HVP.

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 on Draft Bill (Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation): PRO: Housing affordably is difficult. This bill would make a tremendous impact. You can judge a society by how it treats its prisoners and those who are released. Six months is not long enough; it should be 12 months and fully funded. We want to make this more effective and work with you and landlords to make this work. It is a chronic problem that needs to be fully funded. It is important, but does not have enough money. Rather than having people reoffend, this could stabilize people.

OTHER: Currently funded for 280 each month and the demand exceeds the supply. At least 350 vouchers per month are needed. Absent additional funding, this would cut the number of people we can serve in half.

Persons Testifying (Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation): PRO: Roger Valdez, Seattle for Growth; Zak Kinneman, What's Next Washington; Nick Federici, Pioneer Human Services.

OTHER: Danielle Armbruster, DOC.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Forty-eight percent of people that leave our justice system, leave housing insecure and as mentioned, we do not usually use the full six months. The average is actually under three months. However, today's better housing market is making more difficult to find housing depending on where they are from, so this allows some flexibility to help those that actually need it so we do not basically leave them homeless and then have a higher rate of recidivism.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.