

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6385

As of February 10, 2020

Title: An act relating to jobs training for homeless individuals.

Brief Description: Providing for jobs training for homeless individuals.

Sponsors: Senators Zeiger, Kuderer, O'Ban, Nguyen, Lovelett and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/04/20 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/10/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Commerce to establish a competitive program for awarding grants to municipalities using a labor program model designed for providing jobs to individuals experiencing homelessness to lead to full-time employment and stable housing.

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: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Corban Nemeth (786-7736)

Background: Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) is an executive branch agency created in 1994, through the consolidation of the Department of Community Development and the Department of Trade and Economic Development. Commerce is responsible for promoting community and economic development statewide by assisting communities to increase economic vitality and the quality of citizens' lives, and

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assisting the state's businesses to maintain and increase economic competitiveness while maintaining a healthy environment.

Community and economic development efforts include efforts to increase economic opportunity; local planning to manage growth; the promotion and provision of affordable housing and housing-related services; providing public infrastructure; business and trade development; assisting firms and industrial sectors to increase their competitiveness; fostering the development of minority and women-owned businesses; facilitating technology development, transfer, and diffusion; community services and advocacy for low-income persons; and public safety efforts.

Under the Homeless Housing and Assistance chapter of the RCW, "homeless person" means an individual living outside or in a building not meant for human habitation or which they have no legal right to occupy, in an emergency shelter, or in a temporary housing program which may include a transitional and supportive housing program if habitation time limits exist. This definition includes substance abusers, people with mental illness, and sex offenders who are homeless.

In the 2019-21 operating budget, \$100,000 was appropriated to Commerce for each fiscal year to provide a grant to municipalities using a labor program model designed for providing jobs to individuals experiencing homelessness to lead to full-time employment and stable housing. Commerce issued a request for proposal and received one application from the city of Vancouver, to expand a current program known as Talkin' Trash. The contract scope of work with the City of Vancouver and Commerce includes:

- developing, or expanding, a labor program designed for people with housing and employment barriers that provides increasing responsibility and skill development opportunities;
- providing resume support, coaching for interviews, and assistance identifying future employment opportunities; and
- partnering with local homeless housing programs and other service providers to help program participants connect to resources and support.

Summary of Bill: Commerce must establish a competitive program for awarding grants to municipalities using a labor program model designed for providing jobs to individuals experiencing homelessness to lead to full time-time employment and stable housing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 1, 2019.

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 (Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation): PRO: This bill promotes hiring people with barriers to employment due to homelessness using the private sector. Some of the most inspiring work being done on helping people get on the path to self-sufficiency is the jobs programs in our cities, such as Seattle, Auburn, and Tacoma.

Tacoma uses a tiered approach with the ultimate goal of full-time employment and self-sufficiency. This bill borrows the language of a budget proviso from last year. We need to do more of this kind of thing to move the needle on homelessness. Half of all people experiencing homelessness come from five states, California, New York, Florida, Texas, and Washington, with many things in common such as lack of affordable housing, eviction, surviving a disaster, or substance abuse, among other things. The good news is this year's point in time count of homelessness was down. There are lots of businesses out there that want to help, but they do not know how to find the employees. While employment is not the sole answer to homelessness, there are many who will benefit from such assistance.

Persons Testifying (Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation): PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor; Sherri Jensen, Valeo Vocatoin CEO; Alex Hur, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Clark Brekke, Goodwill Industries.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Our homelessness jobs program is remarkably successful. We have utilized funding from the local community and nonprofits to pay a living wage to many individuals and families, allowing them to transition out of homelessness and into stable housing. This program would allow us to expand this valuable work and support individuals on their way to self-sufficiency.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Mitchell Austin, Valeo Vocation.

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