
SENATE BILL 5839

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Senators Darneille, Nguyen, Hasegawa, Palumbo, and Wilson, C.

Read first time 02/06/19. Referred to Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation.

1 AN ACT Relating to personal care services for homeless seniors
2 and persons with disabilities; creating new sections; and providing
3 an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Homeless shelters have seen an
6 increase in the number of physically or cognitively impaired elderly
7 and people with disabilities who need medicaid personal care
8 services. In addition to presenting with cognitive impairment and
9 memory issues, assistance is needed with walking, transferring,
10 toileting, showering, and other personal care tasks. Homeless seniors
11 and people with disabilities are also in need of transportation to
12 medical, pharmacy, and other health care appointments.

13 The number of homeless seniors and people with disabilities in
14 shelters has increased dramatically over the last several years. The
15 national alliance to end homelessness estimated in 2007 homeless
16 people age sixty-two and older who sought shelter accounted for 2.9%
17 of the country's homeless population. In an October 2018 one day
18 count in the largest homeless shelter in Pierce county twenty-six
19 percent, or forty-three people, were over the age of sixty. This data
20 is similar in King county, where it is estimated that thirty-six of
21 the homeless are over the age of fifty.

1 The legislature finds the increased numbers of seniors and people
2 with disabilities experiencing homelessness to be troubling and that
3 tailored interventions are needed to address the issue. Specifically,
4 the legislature desires to bring medicaid personal care services to
5 homeless seniors and people with disabilities in a shelter setting by
6 expanding a promising best practices program and by piloting a
7 personal care services program to bridge the time a person presents
8 with limitations at a homeless shelter and the person becomes
9 eligible for medicaid services.

10 (2) The department of social and health services and a large
11 social services provider that runs a shelter and a home care program
12 partnered in an attempt to bring medicaid personal care services to
13 frail seniors and people with disabilities who were living in the
14 shelter. The partnership had the goal of providing relief as well as
15 testing to see if these services could help people out of
16 homelessness by providing stability and support to help connect them
17 more to the community. A department of social and health services
18 case manager held regular weekly office hours at the shelter in order
19 to assess guests who shelter staff identified as needing services.
20 Once an assessment was complete and services were accepted by the
21 guest, the home care agency would staff the guests with trained
22 caregivers. The initial results of this partnership were excellent;
23 six of the seven homeless who received services found permanent
24 housing. All of the people met the definition of "chronically
25 homeless." None returned to homelessness.

26 The partnership between the department of social and health
27 services and the large social services provider is continuing and the
28 ongoing results are matching the initial results with chronically
29 homeless seniors and people with disabilities finding permanent
30 housing at a much higher rate than the overall homeless shelter
31 population.

32 The legislature desires this model to be expanded and directs the
33 department of social and health services to investigate through this
34 pilot project the practice of sending a case manager into homeless
35 shelters to assist seniors and people with disabilities in accessing
36 services.

37 The legislature finds that the outcome of people finding
38 permanent housing who have received personal care through this model
39 is significant. The legislature notes the success of this partnership
40 is based on homeless seniors and people with disabilities being able

1 to navigate the assessment process. The legislature notes that many
2 people, especially the chronic homeless, are not able to successfully
3 navigate the system and are in need of immediate assistance.

4 (3) The legislature desires to rapidly assist homeless seniors
5 and people with disabilities who present with needs as described in
6 subsection (1) of this section. Therefore, the legislature intends to
7 establish a pilot project to pay for personal care services from the
8 time a homeless senior or person with disabilities presents at a
9 shelter to the time they become eligible for medicaid personal care
10 services.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The department of social and health
12 services shall establish a pilot project to provide personal care
13 services to homeless seniors and persons with disabilities from the
14 time the person presents at a shelter to the time they become
15 eligible for medicaid personal care services.

16 (2) The department shall contract with a single nonprofit
17 organization that provides personal care services to homeless persons
18 and operates a twenty-four hour homeless shelter, and that is
19 currently partnering with the department to bring medicaid personal
20 care services to homeless seniors and persons with disabilities.

21 (3) The pilot shall fund two FTEs of personal care aides to be
22 added to the staff of the homeless shelter operated by the nonprofit
23 organization. The services provided shall match what is now available
24 in the medicaid personal care program. The department shall
25 administer the pilot within funds provided for the pilot and report
26 the outcomes to the legislature.

27 (4) The department shall submit a report by July 1, 2020, to the
28 governor and appropriate legislative committees. The report shall
29 address the following:

30 (a) The number of people served in the pilot;

31 (b) The number of people served in the pilot who transitioned to
32 medicaid personal care;

33 (c) The number of people served in the pilot who found stable
34 housing; and

35 (d) Any additional data and information deemed relevant by the
36 contractor or the department.

37 (5) This section expires December 31, 2020.

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