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**HOUSE BILL 1917**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Dye, Mosbrucker, Graham, and Dent

AN ACT Relating to establishing the Washington state men's commission; and adding a new chapter to Title 43 RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that a clearer picture of gender-based disparities can be provided when data is disaggregated by gender, in addition to other factors such as race and ethnicity. Data, when disaggregated by gender, has shown that boys, male youth, and men experience a breadth of gender-based disparities. The legislature finds it necessary, equitable, and inclusive to establish a Washington state men's commission tasked with addressing these gender-based disparities and advocating for the well-being of Washington's boys, male youth, and men.

In 2018, the Washington state women's commission was created to improve the well-being of women by addressing issues relevant to the problems and needs of women, such as domestic violence, child care, child support, sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, equal compensation and job pathway opportunities in employment, and the specific needs of women of color. The women's commission was founded on the belief that achieving equal opportunity for all Washington residents is vital to promoting a healthy and secure future for all. The legislature finds that to help all Washington residents to contribute to society to their fullest potential, it is crucial to expand the work of dismantling gender-based and sex-based barriers to equal opportunity to include advocating for the well-being of Washington's boys, male youth, and men. The legislature finds that to achieve equal opportunity for all residents of the state, it is critical to also raise awareness of the many challenges faced by boys, male youth, and men, which lead to disproportionate outcomes experienced by that population.

Males experience disproportionate outcomes in areas such as homelessness, criminal justice, education, mental health, domestic relations and family law matters, and workplace safety. The national alliance to end homelessness found that homelessness in America is largely a gendered phenomenon. In the 2018 point-in-time count for Washington, 69 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness were male and 31 percent were female. Of the males experiencing homelessness, 60 percent were living unsheltered; of the females experiencing homelessness, 59 percent were living unsheltered. The legislature finds that dismantling barriers and challenges that lead to homelessness, such as illicit drug use, among male youth and men is a crucial step in helping them to obtain and maintain health and economic security.

The national institute on drug abuse found that nationally, men are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs, and illicit drug use is more likely to result in emergency room visits or overdose deaths for men than for women. The Washington state department of health found that between 2000 and 2019, 60 percent of the individuals who overdosed on drugs were male, and 60 percent of deaths from opioid overdoses were male. In addition, in 2020, the department of health reported that the opioid overdose death rate was 65 percent higher among males than females from 2014 to 2018. The legislature finds that addiction is a precursor to incarceration and that a commission tasked with examining risk factors that lead to drug use among males and strategies for drug prevention is crucial to address drug addiction and break the cycle of incarceration.

The legislature also finds that gender-based disparities are seen in the criminal justice system. Data reported by the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shows that, in 2019, men accounted for 83 percent of people in Washington's city and county jails. In addition, on September 30, 2021, the department of corrections reported that, as of that date, 94 percent of people confined in department of corrections' facilities in Washington were male. The Washington state center for court research found that among Washington's youth placed in juvenile rehabilitation centers in 2019, 73 percent were male. Not only are more male youth being placed in juvenile rehabilitation centers, but their average length of stay is significantly longer than it is for female youth. For residential obligations that ended during fiscal year 2020, the department of children, youth, and families reported that the average length of stay in a juvenile rehabilitation center for male youth was 351 days compared to 168 days for female youth.

The legislature finds that a variety of risk factors and exposure to neglect and maltreatment during childhood and adolescence contribute to an increased risk of incarceration. A 2016 systematic review of 62 prospective and longitudinal studies that looked at the association between exposure to maltreatment during childhood or adolescence and subsequent delinquent behavior found that for males, and only in part for females, maltreatment gives rise to other risk factors which are then associated with offending. In addition, a 2008 study included in the systematic review found that neglect emerged as a strong predictor for a range of different types of crime offenses, and neglect was more influential in the pathway to delinquency for males. The legislature finds that it is imperative to establish a commission tasked with examining risk factors commonly experienced by boys, male youth, and men and to use the information to inform policies and practices, eliminate contributing risk factors, improve outcomes for victims of maltreatment and neglect, and reduce incarceration rates for males.

In addition to being incarcerated at higher rates, the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs found that in 2020, males represented the majority of the victims of violent crimes in Washington and accounted for 74 percent of homicides in the state. The United States department of justice found that nationwide, among the almost 14,000 victims of homicide in the United States in 2019, more than three out of four were male. In addition, according to data published by the Washington state patrol, as of May 2019, 57 percent of missing persons in Washington are male. It also found that among missing Indigenous persons, nearly half are boys, male youth, or men, yet historically, male victims have not been included in legislation or public awareness campaigns.

Gender-based disparities are also found in education, where boys and male youth experience a range of inequities in K-12 education. In 2019, the office of the superintendent of public instruction reported that male youth in Washington dropped out of high school at higher rates than female youth. It also found that boys and male youth are suspended or expelled at higher rates than girls and female youth, which the legislature finds may result in more disruptions in their education thereby putting boys and male youth at risk of falling behind. The legislature also finds that male youth represent the majority of students with learning disabilities. For example, data collected between 2003 and 2011 through the national survey of children's health shows that 12.9 percent of boys compared to 5.6 percent of girls are diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The legislature also finds it is important for boys, male youth, girls, and female youth to have adult men and women role models throughout their K-12 education, but Washington state is trending in the opposite direction of gender parity among teachers. In 1996, 32 percent of teachers were male. By 2020, that figure had dropped to 26 percent. A 2018 evaluation of student survey data showed that students who were assigned to teachers of the same gender reported positive benefits in the areas of personal effort, happiness in class, feeling cared for and motivated by their teacher, quality of student-teacher communication, and college aspirations. A men's commission tasked with examining gender-based learning needs and educating policymakers about educational tools and solutions tailored to address the specific needs of boys and male youth is necessary to ensure equity in the Washington education system.

The legislature finds that gender-based disparities also exist in health care. The center for disease control found that men suffer from a higher rate of suicide. Between 2015 and 2019, among suicide victims in Washington between the ages of 10 and 30, four out of five were boys and male youth, and, in 2020, among suicide victims of all age groups, three out of four were male. The legislature finds that services such as mental health counseling can be an effective early intervention strategy for mental health care, but the Boston Globe reported that nationally, in 2016, female mental health counselors outnumber male mental health counselors two to one. The legislature finds that a men's commission is necessary to examine the causes for the high suicide rate among males and assess best practices and solutions to reduce those rates.

The legislature finds that men experience disparities in the area of jobs and careers. Nursing is a respected, well-paid career, but the department of health reported that of the estimated 62,394 registered nurses in Washington in 2019, only 12 percent were male. Furthermore, social workers have a large influence over people's access to government services, however, only 16 percent of Washington's licensed social workers are men. The legislature finds that it is important to establish a men's commission tasked with developing strategies to encourage men and male youth to consider careers in nursing and other professions where the workforce has traditionally been composed of mostly women.

In 2019, nearly two-thirds of the state workplace injuries in the private sector were experienced by men, and men represented over 86 percent of workplace fatalities in the state. The legislature finds that a men's commission is necessary to study why current laws and practices that promote workplace safety are not working to decrease the number of workplace injuries and death. In addition, the legislature finds that a men's commission is needed to assess the differences between men and women in similar jobs and explore ways to improve the culture and practices for jobs that are more likely to cause injury.

The legislature also finds that improvements need to be made around parenting equity and father engagement. In 2015, the fatherhood project cited to numerous studies that found that people with actively involved father figures during childhood not only experience beneficial outcomes in childhood such as greater academic success, positive social behavior, and reduced contact with the juvenile justice system, but also experience a better chance of having higher levels of success in their careers and marriage, and improved ability to handle stress as an adult. However, the Washington state center for court research found that of the over 3,000 residential time summary reports filed with the court in 2016, only 15 percent of children were scheduled to spend more time with their father than their mother, and 21 percent were scheduled to spend equal amounts of time with both parents. The legislature finds that a men's commission tasked with examining obstacles that prevent a father's involvement in his children's lives and advocating for policies that reduce the chances that a father will be absent in his children's lives is necessary to achieving better short-term and long-term outcomes for all Washington youth.

The legislature intends to create a Washington state men's commission to serve as a focal point in state government to better identify, measure, and minimize disparate and disproportionate outcomes for boys, male youth, and men. The legislature intends to promote a collaborative effort between the men's commission, women's commission, LGBTQ commission, human rights commission, and minority commissions to achieve equal opportunity for all Washington residents.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The Washington state men's commission is established. In carrying out its duties under this chapter, the commission may only focus its efforts in the following five areas: Education; jobs, careers, and financial health; fatherhood, family, and relationships; physical and mental health; and the experiences of males in the criminal justice system and other court systems.

(2) The commission shall be administered by an executive director, who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the governor. The salary of the executive director shall be set by the governor. The executive director may employ staff for the commission as needed. The salaries of the executive director and staff shall be comparable to those of similar positions at the Washington state women's commission.

(3) Within the five focus areas described in subsection (1) of this section, the executive director of the commission shall:

(a) Monitor state legislation, and advocate for legislation which may positively impact boys, male youth, and men in one or more of the five focus areas described in subsection (1) of this section;

(b) Work with state agencies to assess programs and policies that tangibly and directly impacts boys, male youth, and men in one or more of the five focus areas described in subsection (1) of this section and propose solutions that may provide improved outcomes;

(c) Coordinate and collaborate with the minority commissions, women's commission, LGBTQ commission, and human rights commission to address issues of mutual concern, including gender and racial equity;

(d) Work as a liaison between the public and private sector to eliminate barriers to equity for boys, male youth, and men; and

(e) Maintain a list of eligible nominees for membership on the commission who have demonstrated expertise and interest in issues impacting boys, male youth, and men, and nominate such individuals for consideration by the governor.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The Washington state men's commission shall consist of nine voting members. The speaker of the house of representatives and the minority leader of the house of representatives shall each appoint two members to the commission. The president of the senate and the minority leader of the senate shall each appoint two members to the commission. The governor shall appoint one member to the commission, with the advice and consent of the senate. In making such appointments, all appointing authorities shall give due consideration to nominations submitted by the executive director.

(2) The appointing authorities may only appoint members who have demonstrated work in, and an understanding of, at least one of the five focus areas described under section 2(1) of this act as it applies to issues impacting boys, male youth, and men.

(3) Two members of the senate, one from each of the two major political parties, appointed by the president of the senate, and two members of the house of representatives, one from each of the two major political parties, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, shall serve as nonvoting members in an advisory capacity. The appointing authorities shall appoint members who have demonstrated a commitment and interest in furthering the purpose of the commission. All legislative advisory members shall serve a two-year term and the position of any legislative advisory member shall be deemed vacated whenever such member ceases to be a member of the house from which the member was appointed.

(4) At the commissions first meeting, each appointed voting member shall draw lots to determine the length of time they will serve on the commission. Three members shall serve one year, three shall serve two years, and three shall serve three years. Upon expiration of such terms, subsequent appointments shall be for three years. In no case may any voting member serve more than three years without formal reappointment by the appropriate appointing authority.

(5) Any vacancies occurring in the membership of the commission shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointments.

(6)(a) Nonlegislative members of the commission must be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(b) Legislative members of the commission must be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with RCW 44.04.120.

(7) A simple majority of the commission's voting membership constitutes a quorum for the purpose of conducting business.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Within the five focus areas described in section 2(1) of this act, the Washington state men's commission shall have the following duties:

(a) Provide a clearinghouse for information regarding both state and federal legislation as it relates to the purpose of this chapter;

(b) Identify and define specific needs of boys, male youth, and men of all races and provide recommendations for addressing those needs in the biennial report to the legislature and governor under (c) of this subsection, and on an ongoing basis;

(c) Submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor every year, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, detailing the commission's activities;

(d) Consult with state agencies regarding the effect of agency policies, procedures, practices, laws, and administrative rules on the unique problems and needs of boys, male youth, and men. The commission shall also advise such state agencies on the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated policies, plans, and programs focusing on those problems and needs;

(e) Gather data and provide resource and referral information to agencies and the public in order to implement the purposes of this chapter;

(f) Hold public hearings to gather input on issues related to the unique problems and needs of men and male youth;

(g) Advocate for the removal of legal and social barriers for boys, male youth, and men; and

(h) Review best practices for sexual harassment policies and training and provide recommendations to state agencies as they update their sexual harassment policies. The commission shall also maintain a file of sexual harassment policies that meet high quality standards and make these files available for agency use.

(2) To inform public policy, the commission may consult with nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations that specialize or provide services relating to one of the five focus areas described in section 2(1) of this act.

(3) State agencies must provide appropriate and reasonable assistance to the commission upon request, including gathering and providing data and information, to carry out the purpose of this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The Washington state men's commission may receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private sources that are made for the use or benefit of the commission and to expend the same or any income therefrom according to their terms and the purpose of this chapter. The commission's executive director shall make a report of such funds received from private sources to the office of financial management on a regular basis. Such funds received from private sources shall not be applied to reduce or substitute for the commission's budget as appropriated by the legislature, but shall be applied and expended toward projects and functions authorized by this chapter that were not funded by the legislature.

(2) In carrying out its duties, the commission may enter into such agreements with public and private institutions, local governments, private industry, community organizations, and other segments of the general public as may be needed to promote equal opportunity for boys, male youth, and men in government, education, economic security, employment, and services.

(3) The commission may adopt rules and regulations pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW as necessary to implement the purpose of this chapter.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 5 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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