

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5353

As Passed House - Amended:

April 9, 2021

Title: An act relating to creating a partnership model that facilitates community engagement with law enforcement.

Brief Description: Creating a partnership model that facilitates community engagement with law enforcement.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Conway, Darneille, Nguyen and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety: 3/19/21, 3/26/21 [DPA];

Appropriations: 4/1/21 [DPA(PS)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/9/21, 97-1.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill (As Amended By House)

- Creates a pilot project within the Department of Commerce to award grants to public agencies and nongovernmental organizations fostering community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement.
- Requires the Department of Commerce to submit a preliminary report to the Legislature regarding the pilot project by January 1, 2022, and submit a final report to the Legislature by December 1, 2023.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Johnson, J., Vice Chair; Davis, Hackney, Lovick, Orwall, Ramos and Simmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Klippert, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Mosbrucker, Ranking Minority Member; Graham, Griffey and Young.

Staff: Corey Patton (786-7388).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Public Safety. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chandler, Chopp, Cody, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Frame, Hansen, Harris, Hoff, Johnson, J., Lekanoff, Pollet, Rude, Ryu, Senn, Springer, Steele, Stonier, Sullivan and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Jacobsen and Schmick.

Staff: Jessica Van Horne (786-7288).

Background:

Some counties in Washington have developed programs designed to promote collaboration and engagement between law enforcement agencies and local communities. Programs vary in mission, scope, and the services provided, but are generally staffed by teams of program managers and mobilization specialists and supported by community members with ties to local services such as education, social services, health care, and law enforcement. Examples of ongoing programs include the Okanogan County Community Coalition, the Pierce County Safe Streets program, and Safe Yakima Valley.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Department of Commerce (Commerce) must create a pilot project to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement. The project must include 12 to 15 grant awards in counties that have demonstrated commitment to programs that promote community engagement in public safety, including Spokane, Pierce, King, Okanogan, Yakima, Cowlitz, Clark, Chelan-Douglas, Walla-Walla, Benton-Franklin, Grant, and

Snohomish counties. Commerce must adopt policies and procedures to administer the project, including policies and procedures for:

- an application process;
- disbursement of grant awards to selected applicants;
- tracking compliance and proper use of funds; and
- measuring outcomes.

To qualify for the project, an applicant must:

- be a public agency or nongovernmental organization;
- not be a law enforcement agency, unless there are no other eligible applicants from the community or county the law enforcement agency serves;
- have community engagement;
- have established or be willing to establish a coordinated effort with committed partners, which must include law enforcement and organizations committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion of community members, including organizations whose leadership reflects communities most impacted by racism; and
- have established priorities, policies, and measurable goals in compliance with the project's requirements.

An agency or organization that receives a grant from the project must:

- lead and facilitate neighborhood organizing initiatives;
- build substantive law enforcement-community partnerships;
- mobilize youth to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence;
- engage businesses to help prevent crimes through safety training and other prevention initiatives;
- provide training and technical assistance on implementing community engagement, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth engagement, and business engagement;
- maintain leadership for managing the grant, including an administrator who acts as an available point of contact; and
- collect and report data and information required by Commerce.

Commerce must, in consultation with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, develop reporting guidelines for grant recipients to measure whether the project has an impact on crime rates and community engagement with, and perceptions of, law enforcement. Commerce must submit a preliminary report to the Legislature containing details about the grant recipients and Commerce's reporting guidelines by January 1, 2022, and submit a final report containing an analysis of the information collected from the project by December 1, 2023. The project expires on January 1, 2024.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Public Safety):

(In support) The community engagement process described in this bill provides a structure to embolden community participation in public safety and focus on local community needs, especially in communities most impacted by racism. This bill provides training to law enforcement officers and community members on racial bias, racial profiling, and anti-racist practices.

The provision allowing a law enforcement agency serving a population of 10,000 or fewer people to apply for a grant should be removed. This bill should focus on leadership by community coalitions and reflect the community's vision of collaboration. Law enforcement agencies do not usually do organizing work and would prefer to partner with community organizations. By promoting community leadership, rather than government leadership, this bill will preserve community interest and ownership, build an alliance of mutual trust and respect, and mitigate the polarization between police and disenfranchised communities.

More should be done to bring law enforcement agencies together with their communities. This bill is limited to providing 12 to 15 grants, which is a slow start. Law enforcement agencies serving populations of 10,000 or fewer should have the opportunity to apply for grants. Some communities do not have the infrastructure or resources to pursue grant funding on their own.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) None.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Public Safety): James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Teresa Taylor, Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs; and Priscilla Lisicich, Safe Streets.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Public Safety): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.