

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5607

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Housing & Local Government, January 18, 2022

Title: An act relating to including individuals in jails and hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities in the state's annual homeless census.

Brief Description: Including individuals in jails and hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities in the state's annual homeless census.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, L., Braun, Hasegawa, Rolfes, Wellman and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Housing & Local Government: 1/12/22, 1/18/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the state's annual homeless census to include persons in jails or hospitals who were homeless before entering such facilities.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kuderer, Chair; Das, Vice Chair; Fortunato, Ranking Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member; Cleveland, Lovelett, Sefzik, Trudeau and Wilson, J.

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

Background: The Department of Commerce (Commerce) must annually conduct a homeless census that counts all homeless individuals in coordination with existing homeless census projects, including those funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Every year HUD requires communities across the nation to collect data on their homeless populations and to report the data to HUD. The data collection process is referred to as the Point-In-Time (PIT) count and is collected as a

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means to estimate the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals in the United States. Commerce provides survey forms for counties and agencies to use for their PIT counts, but counties can opt to use their own forms as long as they comply with state guidelines. Any data on subpopulations and other characteristics of the homeless must, at a minimum, be consistent with HUD requirements.

Summary of Bill: The state's annual homeless census must make every effort to count persons who are admitted into hospitals or incarcerated in local jails and had no permanent address before entering such facilities. Any data or information collected during the annual homeless census about persons who are admitted into hospitals or incarcerated in local jails and had no permanent address before entering such facilities is not required to be reported to HUD.

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: PRO: Washington State has spent billions of dollars during the past decade to attempt to reduce homelessness, with the problem only getting worse with the unsheltered population. Washington State is now only second to California in the reported number of unsheltered persons. Homeless census numbers are greatly understated as homeless persons in jail or hospitals are not counted except for in one county in Washington, where one in four unsheltered homeless are in jail or a hospital. A supplemental count may be available but the goal is to document all unsheltered homeless.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lynda Wilson, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.