
HOUSE BILL 1917

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

By Representatives Dye, Mosbrucker, Graham, and Dent

Read first time 01/11/22. Referred to Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations.

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

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that a clearer
5 picture of gender-based disparities can be provided when data is
6 disaggregated by gender, in addition to other factors such as race
7 and ethnicity. Data, when disaggregated by gender, has shown that
8 boys, male youth, and men experience a breadth of gender-based
9 disparities. The legislature finds it necessary, equitable, and
10 inclusive to establish a Washington state men's commission tasked
11 with addressing these gender-based disparities and advocating for the
12 well-being of Washington's boys, male youth, and men.

13 In 2018, the Washington state women's commission was created to
14 improve the well-being of women by addressing issues relevant to the
15 problems and needs of women, such as domestic violence, child care,
16 child support, sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, equal
17 compensation and job pathway opportunities in employment, and the
18 specific needs of women of color. The women's commission was founded
19 on the belief that achieving equal opportunity for all Washington
20 residents is vital to promoting a healthy and secure future for all.
21 The legislature finds that to help all Washington residents to

1 contribute to society to their fullest potential, it is crucial to
2 expand the work of dismantling gender-based and sex-based barriers to
3 equal opportunity to include advocating for the well-being of
4 Washington's boys, male youth, and men. The legislature finds that to
5 achieve equal opportunity for all residents of the state, it is
6 critical to also raise awareness of the many challenges faced by
7 boys, male youth, and men, which lead to disproportionate outcomes
8 experienced by that population.

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

22 The national institute on drug abuse found that nationally, men
23 are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs,
24 and illicit drug use is more likely to result in emergency room
25 visits or overdose deaths for men than for women. The Washington
26 state department of health found that between 2000 and 2019, 60
27 percent of the individuals who overdosed on drugs were male, and 60
28 percent of deaths from opioid overdoses were male. In addition, in
29 2020, the department of health reported that the opioid overdose
30 death rate was 65 percent higher among males than females from 2014
31 to 2018. The legislature finds that addiction is a precursor to
32 incarceration and that a commission tasked with examining risk
33 factors that lead to drug use among males and strategies for drug
34 prevention is crucial to address drug addiction and break the cycle
35 of incarceration.

36 The legislature also finds that gender-based disparities are seen
37 in the criminal justice system. Data reported by the Washington
38 association of sheriffs and police chiefs shows that, in 2019, men
39 accounted for 83 percent of people in Washington's city and county
40 jails. In addition, on September 30, 2021, the department of

1 corrections reported that, as of that date, 94 percent of people
2 confined in department of corrections' facilities in Washington were
3 male. The Washington state center for court research found that among
4 Washington's youth placed in juvenile rehabilitation centers in 2019,
5 73 percent were male. Not only are more male youth being placed in
6 juvenile rehabilitation centers, but their average length of stay is
7 significantly longer than it is for female youth. For residential
8 obligations that ended during fiscal year 2020, the department of
9 children, youth, and families reported that the average length of
10 stay in a juvenile rehabilitation center for male youth was 351 days
11 compared to 168 days for female youth.

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

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

1 Gender-based disparities are also found in education, where boys
2 and male youth experience a range of inequities in K-12 education. In
3 2019, the office of the superintendent of public instruction reported
4 that male youth in Washington dropped out of high school at higher
5 rates than female youth. It also found that boys and male youth are
6 suspended or expelled at higher rates than girls and female youth,
7 which the legislature finds may result in more disruptions in their
8 education thereby putting boys and male youth at risk of falling
9 behind. The legislature also finds that male youth represent the
10 majority of students with learning disabilities. For example, data
11 collected between 2003 and 2011 through the national survey of
12 children's health shows that 12.9 percent of boys compared to 5.6
13 percent of girls are diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity
14 disorder. The legislature also finds it is important for boys, male
15 youth, girls, and female youth to have adult men and women role
16 models throughout their K-12 education, but Washington state is
17 trending in the opposite direction of gender parity among teachers.
18 In 1996, 32 percent of teachers were male. By 2020, that figure had
19 dropped to 26 percent. A 2018 evaluation of student survey data
20 showed that students who were assigned to teachers of the same gender
21 reported positive benefits in the areas of personal effort, happiness
22 in class, feeling cared for and motivated by their teacher, quality
23 of student-teacher communication, and college aspirations. A men's
24 commission tasked with examining gender-based learning needs and
25 educating policymakers about educational tools and solutions tailored
26 to address the specific needs of boys and male youth is necessary to
27 ensure equity in the Washington education system.

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

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

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

22 The legislature also finds that improvements need to be made
23 around parenting equity and father engagement. In 2015, the
24 fatherhood project cited to numerous studies that found that people
25 with actively involved father figures during childhood not only
26 experience beneficial outcomes in childhood such as greater academic
27 success, positive social behavior, and reduced contact with the
28 juvenile justice system, but also experience a better chance of
29 having higher levels of success in their careers and marriage, and
30 improved ability to handle stress as an adult. However, the
31 Washington state center for court research found that of the over
32 3,000 residential time summary reports filed with the court in 2016,
33 only 15 percent of children were scheduled to spend more time with
34 their father than their mother, and 21 percent were scheduled to
35 spend equal amounts of time with both parents. The legislature finds
36 that a men's commission tasked with examining obstacles that prevent
37 a father's involvement in his children's lives and advocating for
38 policies that reduce the chances that a father will be absent in his
39 children's lives is necessary to achieving better short-term and
40 long-term outcomes for all Washington youth.

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

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The Washington state men's commission
10 is established. In carrying out its duties under this chapter, the
11 commission may only focus its efforts in the following five areas:
12 Education; jobs, careers, and financial health; fatherhood, family,
13 and relationships; physical and mental health; and the experiences of
14 males in the criminal justice system and other court systems.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington state men's commission
2 shall consist of nine voting members. The speaker of the house of
3 representatives and the minority leader of the house of
4 representatives shall each appoint two members to the commission. The
5 president of the senate and the minority leader of the senate shall
6 each appoint two members to the commission. The governor shall
7 appoint one member to the commission, with the advice and consent of
8 the senate. In making such appointments, all appointing authorities
9 shall give due consideration to nominations submitted by the
10 executive director.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) Within the five focus areas described
7 in section 2(1) of this act, the Washington state men's commission
8 shall have the following duties:

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

11 (b) Identify and define specific needs of boys, male youth, and
12 men of all races and provide recommendations for addressing those
13 needs in the biennial report to the legislature and governor under

14 (c) of this subsection, and on an ongoing basis;

15 (c) Submit a report to the appropriate committees of the
16 legislature and the governor every year, in compliance with RCW
17 43.01.036, detailing the commission's activities;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The Washington state men's commission
6 may receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private
7 sources that are made for the use or benefit of the commission and to
8 expend the same or any income therefrom according to their terms and
9 the purpose of this chapter. The commission's executive director
10 shall make a report of such funds received from private sources to
11 the office of financial management on a regular basis. Such funds
12 received from private sources shall not be applied to reduce or
13 substitute for the commission's budget as appropriated by the
14 legislature, but shall be applied and expended toward projects and
15 functions authorized by this chapter that were not funded by the
16 legislature.

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

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

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act
27 constitute a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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