
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5241

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Senate Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senators Dhingra, Nguyen, Darneille, Das, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Lias, Nobles, Saldaña, Stanford, and Wilson, C.)

READ FIRST TIME 02/05/21.

1 AN ACT Relating to promoting economic inclusion for people
2 experiencing poverty; adding new sections to chapter 43.31 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature declares that economic
6 inclusion shall be a top priority of Washington state's economic
7 recovery. The legislature finds that the novel coronavirus has had a
8 disproportionate effect upon at-risk communities. The legislature
9 recognizes that for communities to thrive and remain vibrant, that
10 recovery needs to be inclusive of people who are furthest away from
11 opportunity and disproportionately more likely to experience economic
12 hardship. The legislature acknowledges that stand-alone human service
13 programs meet a pressing need but can be difficult to access for
14 those lacking the resources to do so. The legislature recognizes that
15 barriers to access can delay reentry into the workforce and career
16 development. The legislature finds that leveraging or supporting the
17 integration of existing benefits and services whenever possible will
18 help people access the benefits they need to help them move out of
19 poverty, without creating another duplicative system. The legislature
20 finds that incorporating people with lived experience into systems
21 development can help improve meaningful access to state programs. The

1 legislature, therefore, intends to help facilitate an inclusive
2 economic recovery by creating an economic inclusion grant program to
3 provide greater access to resources for those in need.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.31
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 The definitions in this section apply throughout this act unless
7 the context clearly requires otherwise.

8 (1) "Department" means the department of commerce.

9 (2) "People experiencing poverty" means households whose income
10 are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

11 (3) "Rural counties" has the same meaning as provided for in RCW
12 82.14.370.

13 (4) "Self-sufficiency" means a level of household income that is
14 equal to or more than the self-sufficiency standard for a household
15 as determined by the University of Washington's self-sufficiency
16 calculator.

17 (5) "Steering committee" means the poverty reduction work group
18 steering committee created in response to a directive of the
19 governor, dated November 6, 2017.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.31
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) The department, in consultation with the department of social
23 and health services, the employment security department, the
24 department of children, youth, and families, the health care
25 authority, and the steering committee, shall make and oversee the
26 implementation of local economic inclusion grants available to local
27 communities to promote equity, economic inclusion, and a stable
28 financial foundation for people experiencing poverty, with a
29 particular focus on people of color and people in rural counties,
30 primarily through better coordination of existing programs and
31 resources. The purpose of these grants is to empower and incentivize
32 local communities to coordinate existing poverty reduction resources
33 and benefits to make them easier to access, get them to the people
34 who need them, and work as a coordinated system, to help more people
35 move out of poverty and be included in Washington's economic success.

36 (2) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this
37 specific purpose, local economic inclusion grants shall be made
38 available in communities throughout all regions of the state,

1 including rural counties and urban communities for the purpose as
2 described in subsection (1) of this section, with an emphasis on
3 economically distressed communities as defined by the department.

4 (3) Recipients of a local economic inclusion grant shall:

5 (a) Coordinate existing poverty reduction resources and benefits
6 to make them easier to access, get them to the people who need them,
7 and work as a coordinated system, to help more people move out of
8 poverty and be included in Washington's economic success;

9 (b) Identify both the federal regulations that prevent better
10 local coordination and the needs for additional state or federal
11 funding for continuous improvement of the poverty reduction system in
12 future years;

13 (c) Develop a local leadership coalition or use an existing local
14 partnership that must include people experiencing poverty, people of
15 color, homelessness programs, and representatives of the workforce
16 development council, the health care authority community service
17 offices, accountable communities of health, and associate development
18 organizations, and may include other members;

19 (d) Identify a fiscal agent and lead coordinator that is either
20 an associate development council, workforce development council, or
21 other organization with demonstrated capacity to fulfill the
22 responsibilities and requirements of the fiscal agent, as defined by
23 the department;

24 (e) Work with people experiencing poverty to ensure they have
25 access to multiple benefits to help them meet their basic needs, in
26 alignment with local care coordination efforts, and when ready,
27 develop individualized career plans leading to a self-sufficiency
28 wage, which must be at least 200 percent of the federal poverty
29 level, or the higher level established by the self-sufficiency
30 standard;

31 (f) Provide streamlined access to local partners who can pay for
32 education or training elements of a person's individualized career
33 plan using federal Pell grants, the Washington college grant, or
34 other resources;

35 (g) Provide streamlined access to local partners who can make
36 monthly payments to the low-income person while in training, using
37 existing resources such as work study payments, work experience
38 payments, needs-related payments, or other financial aid or workforce
39 development resources, as identified locally, and in consultation
40 with technical assistance provided by the department. Such payments

1 must work to maximize the total benefits available to the individual.
2 To the extent possible under federal law, such payments must be
3 structured so they do not reduce other benefits; including but not
4 limited to the supplemental nutritional assistance program, temporary
5 assistance for needy families, special supplemental nutrition program
6 for women, infants, and children, medicaid, workforce innovation and
7 opportunity act supportive services, or other financial and health
8 benefits, and may be comparable to payments received by trade
9 adjustment assistance or Montgomery GI beneficiaries; in order to
10 provide stability during training and education;

11 (h) Develop a local coordination team that works to ensure easier
12 access to all state and local government services, and identifies
13 staff to be care and benefits navigators. These may be existing
14 coordinators and navigators if solutions are already in place for the
15 community to build upon rather than duplicate. The care and benefit
16 navigators must provide convenient one-stop access to benefits
17 available to people experiencing poverty. At a minimum, it shall be
18 encouraged that people served by the economic inclusion grants apply
19 for and, if eligible, receive supplemental nutritional assistance
20 program, temporary assistance for needy families, medicaid, workforce
21 innovation and opportunity act supportive services, or other
22 financial and health benefits, as deemed eligible and appropriate for
23 each person. To the extent allowable under federal law, access to
24 benefits may not be conditioned upon seeking employment nor limited
25 to people pursuing individual career plans, and benefits must be
26 available to people experiencing poverty who are in need of financial
27 stability whether or not they are pursuing career plans;

28 (i) Ensure equitable access to state and local government
29 services for people with disabilities, which may include equipment
30 and technology purchases;

31 (j) Both identify where federal barriers hinder efforts to
32 coordinate benefits for customers, and elevate those issues to the
33 department. The department, in consultation with the department of
34 social and health services, the employment security department, the
35 department of children, youth, and families, the health care
36 authority, and the steering committee may apply for federal waivers
37 and propose federal law changes to make the authorizing environment
38 better support coordinated service delivery across programs;

1 (k) Ensure options for career development, English language
2 learners, and other services for both parents in two-parent families,
3 including child care if desired by the family; and

4 (l) Coordinate with similar federally funded or federally driven
5 service coordination efforts as appropriate.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.31
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 In managing the economic inclusion grants, the department shall
9 consult with the steering committee. Members of the steering
10 committee must be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in RCW
11 43.03.050 and 43.03.060, as well as child care and other expenses as
12 needed for each day a steering committee member attends meetings to
13 provide consultative assistance to the agencies managing the economic
14 inclusion grants; for up to 12 meetings per calendar year.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.31
16 RCW to read as follows:

17 (1) The department, in consultation with the department of social
18 and health services, the employment security department, the
19 department of children, youth, and families, the health care
20 authority, and the steering committee, may apply for federal waivers
21 to remove federal barriers to coordinating service delivery across
22 multiple programs, where possible. Where waivers are not possible,
23 the department shall develop a comprehensive list of federal rules
24 and or policies that are creating barriers and include this
25 information in the annual report as provided for in subsection (4) of
26 this section.

27 (2) The department of social and health services, in consultation
28 with the department, employment security department, the department
29 of children, youth, and families, the health care authority, the
30 steering committee, and other stakeholders, shall further develop
31 measures and indicators of equitable and inclusive economic recovery
32 already underway in the department of social and health services
33 technical advisory group on inclusive economic recovery, and apply
34 those measures as needed to help promote economic recovery that is
35 racially equitable and fully inclusive of people experiencing
36 poverty, people of color, people in rural counties, people with
37 disabilities, and other key demographics that have historically been
38 left behind in economic recovery.

1 (3) In the event an applicant has not submitted adequate
2 documentation to participate within three months after grant
3 announcement, the agencies may redistribute the unclaimed funding to
4 other participating local areas.

5 (4) By November 15, 2021, and annually thereafter, and in
6 compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department, in consultation with
7 the department of social and health services, the employment security
8 department, the department of children, youth, and families, the
9 health care authority, and the steering committee shall report to the
10 governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature, which
11 shall include the legislative-executive work-first poverty reduction
12 oversight task force. The annual report must include progress
13 reports, an estimate of costs avoided by the state when a person
14 moves out of poverty and into self-sufficiency, measures of equitable
15 and inclusive economic recovery, and model legislative language to
16 further expand economic inclusion, reduce poverty, and increase
17 coordinated service delivery across programs and agencies.

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