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**HOUSE BILL 2287**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Farivar, Goodman, Simmons, Chopp, Nance, Street, Davis, Ortiz-Self, Ramel, Peterson, and Ormsby

AN ACT Relating to creating an advisory board to the office of the corrections ombuds; adding a new section to chapter 43.06C RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature created the office of the corrections ombuds to serve as an independent and impartial entity to provide oversight, monitoring, and investigation into issues arising within the state's prisons. It was also created to help strengthen procedures and practices that promote the health, safety, welfare, and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals and reduce the exposure of the department of corrections to litigation. To ensure that the office's work remains focused on addressing the needs of currently incarcerated people, the legislature hereby creates an advisory board composed of community stakeholders, including current and formerly incarcerated people, to provide advice and feedback to the ombuds.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.06C RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) By December 1, 2024, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the governor shall convene an ombuds advisory board with several purposes in support of the ombuds function. The board shall work with the ombuds to create and participate in a priority setting process. The board shall receive briefings or reports from the ombuds relating to deidentified data, trends, and other relevant issues, and make recommendations to the ombuds regarding the accomplishment of its purposes. The board does not participate in any ombuds investigations and is not authorized to receive records that are confidential pursuant to RCW 43.06C.060.

(b) The board may issue its own annual report that provides the governor and legislature with recommendations regarding the ombuds performance, budget, and changes in the law that would enhance ombuds effectiveness.

(2) Upon each vacancy and during original creation of the board, the ombuds may provide the governor recommendations for appointment to the board. The governor may consider these recommendations when making appointments.

(3) The board initially consists of the following members:

(a) Two currently incarcerated individuals, one from the men's division and one from the women's division, who have served at least five years of incarceration and have at least five years left on their sentence;

(b) Two formerly incarcerated individuals, one from the men's division and one from the women's division, who have served at least five years of incarceration and have reintegrated recently into the community;

(c) Two family members who have been affected by incarceration;

(d) A community member with extensive knowledge and experience in issues related to racial, ethnic, or religious diversity within the correctional system;

(e) A community member with extensive knowledge and experience in the accommodation needs of individuals with disabilities;

(f) A community member with extensive knowledge and experience in reentry supports or reentry programming;

(g) A community member with a medical background; and

(h) A community member with a gender responsive background.

(4) After the full membership is attained, the board shall develop a process for replacing members in case of resignation or expiration of terms.

(5) Board members serve a term of two years, except that the board shall create and implement a system of staggered terms, and no member may serve more than two consecutive terms. The board will designate two cochairs by vote, and one must be currently or formerly incarcerated.

(6) Eligible members of the board, including incarcerated individuals, shall receive stipends according to RCW 43.03.220. The department of corrections shall work with the office of the corrections ombuds to develop a process where currently incarcerated and eligible board members may be paid stipends for their participation.

(7) The board shall convene at least quarterly.

(8) The board is subject to the open public meetings act, chapter 42.30 RCW.

(9) The office shall provide administrative and clerical assistance to the board.

(10) Board members must complete training to utilize an antiracist lens in their duties as board members.

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