

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1543

As Reported by House Committee On:
Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry

Title: An act relating to establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Brief Description: Establishing a wild horse holding and training program at Coyote Ridge corrections center.

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Kretz, Springer, Graham, Eslick, Mosbrucker, Chapman, Ryu, Wylie, Klicker, Couture and Davis.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry: 2/13/23, 2/14/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Corrections to study and develop a plan for wild horse training and development of a farrier program at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.
- Requires the plan to evaluate training methods, facilities, property, and financial opportunities for the program.
- Requires a report assessing the implementation needs by November 1, 2023.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY, JUSTICE, & REENTRY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Simmons, Vice Chair; Mosbrucker, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Davis, Farivar, Fosse, Graham and Ramos.

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.

Staff: Martha Wehling (786-7067).

Background:

Individual Reentry Plans and Education.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) develops an individual reentry plan for each incarcerated individual in custody of the DOC. The plan includes the period of incarceration through release into the community, and includes housing, employment, education, and other areas needed to facilitate successful reintegration into the community. The DOC's educational programming opportunities for incarcerated individuals include high school diplomas, vocational skills, and work and education programs. Programming during incarceration is based on the individual's reentry plan.

Correctional Industries.

The DOC has a voluntary work program that it operates through Correctional Industries. The program is designed to maintain and expand work training programs to develop marketable job skills and increase successful reentry to the community. Programs include technical skills, service and manufacturing industries, and trade apprenticeship coaching.

Wild Horse Training and Holding Programs.

In 2013 a partnership between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Arizona Correctional Industries, through the Arizona Department of Corrections, opened the Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Training and Holding Facility. The program moves wild horses and burros from the BLM to a prison facility, where incarcerated individuals gentle and train the wild animals to enhance adoptability. The BLM then offers the horses and burros for adoption and sale at a higher fee than for untrained animals.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is directed to conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan to implement a wild horse training and farrier program in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center. Farriers maintain horse hooves, a routine service necessary as part of horse ownership. The DOC report and implementation plan should be provided to the Governor and Legislature by November 1, 2023.

To prepare the report and implementation plan, the DOC must consult with the BLM, and the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Walla Walla Community College, Washington State University, federal and state agencies, local governments, and experts in wild horse management and training.

The DOC implementation plan must include the following components:

- use natural horsemanship as the basis for gentling and training;

- consult with similar programs in other states;
- develop facilities to hold and train the wild horses;
- identify costs to establish and maintain the operations, facilities, and staff;
- evaluate property needed to operate the facility;
- evaluate a partnership with Walla Walla Community College to establish a farrier certificate course, including business classes;
- consult with Washington State University regarding the opportunity to practice on animals at the College of Veterinary Medicine; and
- assess necessary legal or policy changes.

The facility will be designed to feed, care for, restore, and train the BLM horses and burros. The facility development must consider the safety and welfare of the incarcerated participants and the DOC staff, maintain security for the DOC institutions, ensure the welfare of the horses stabled in the facilities, and use repurposed materials from existing facilities. Consideration must be given to using Correctional Industries to construct, maintain, and operate the facilities.

The plan must also consider the availability of financial support from the BLM and other federal funds. The property evaluation must consider property available for purchase or lease in order to produce hay, construct training and stabling facilities, and identify the availability of both well and surface water.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2023.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Bureau of Land Management and Departments of Corrections in several states have collaborated to provide prison inmates with skill building that only a horse can teach you. The program uses natural horsemanship, which also teaches individuals to control their own emotions and build relationship skills, including self-control. This is because a horse cannot be controlled by force; it will just resist more. This is a valuable lesson for young people. Even if the participants do not go on to work with horses, the program teaches amazing lessons. Families of program participants in Arizona say the program builds skills, confidence, and self-control that assists with stress management and improves success with reentry. Of the 75 individuals who went through the program, only two returned to a correctional facility. Similar programs for children who have issues with drugs or the law are successful. Those programs teach individuals discipline because a horse knows when a person is not honest or natural with them, and the horse needs to be

taken care of, even if the person is tired or it is a holiday. When a person learns to rely on a wild animal like a horse, it provides the opportunity to begin to learn to rely on humans too. The program will add a farrier training program, which creates a marketable skill that provides an opportunity for released individuals to own a small business and fill a work force gap because Washington has a shortage of farriers. There are 150,000 horses in the state, making it eleventh in the country, and there is a strong demand for this type of education. The program will provide well-trained horses that are valuable and useful as trail horses. Horses are used to ride on public lands, and many trail riders use mustangs from federal land. The United States Border Patrol also uses these horses.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mary Dye, prime sponsor; Mike Hoover; Jeff Chapman, John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders and Back Country Horsemen of Washington; and Zachary Kinneman.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.