

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2210

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

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

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

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Couture, Graham, Fosse, Springer and Davis.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry: 1/18/24 [DP];
Appropriations: 1/31/24, 2/2/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Corrections (DOC) to conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan for implementing a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program at a state corrections center.
- Requires the DOC to submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and the Legislature by November 1, 2024.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY, JUSTICE, & REENTRY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Mosbrucker, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Davis, Farivar, Fosse and Graham.

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

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.

Background:

Correctional Industries.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has a voluntary work program that it operates through Correctional Industries (CI). 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. Some participants in CI work programs receive financial compensation for their work, while other work is performed without financial compensation for the benefit of the community. Any wages or gratuities that a person may earn in a work program are subject to tax and other various deductions depending on the industry classification.

Federal Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program.

The United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Program manages and protects wild horses and burros on 26.9 million acres of public lands across 10 western states. The federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 authorizes the BLM to remove excess wild horses and burros from the range to sustain the health and productivity of public lands.

Arizona Wild Horse Inmate Program.

In 2012 Arizona Correctional Industries and the BLM partnered to create the Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP), where incarcerated individuals learn how to tame and domesticate wild horses and burros obtained from the BLM so they can be offered for adoption. The WHIP employs a staff of professional horse trainers who provide horsemanship, animal husbandry, and farrier skills. The training facility is located within the prison, and horses and burros are fed and cared for in a holding center across from the prison complex.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Corrections (DOC), through Correctional Industries, must conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan to implement a wild horse training, holding, and farrier program in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at a state corrections center.

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

In developing the implementation plan, the DOC must:

- use natural horsemanship as the basis for gentling and training;
- evaluate and consult with similar programs in other states;

- develop design and construction options for holding and training program facilities;
- determine the costs to establish and maintain the operations, facilities, and staff;
- evaluate the availability of land and water necessary to support the program;
- evaluate steps necessary to partner with Walla Walla Community College to establish a farrier certificate course to be completed in conjunction with the wild horse training program;
- consult with Washington State University regarding whether the College of Veterinary Medicine may have students practice care at the training and holding facilities; and
- assess whether there are any changes to state statutes or DOC policies necessary for implementation.

The DOC must complete the study and submit a report and implementation plan to the Governor and the Legislature by November 1, 2024.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) There has been support for the idea proposed in the bill. The current bill has a different title and is broader than a previous bill so that Correctional Industries can study and create a plan for a program at the appropriate correctional facility. The Walla Walla correctional facility and Walla Walla Community College have agreed to do a feasibility study, but if the population is not appropriate for the program at the Walla Walla correctional facility the bill is broad enough to accommodate finding another appropriate facility. The Walla Walla correctional facility houses incarcerated persons that may be there for a shorter period of time, but however long people engage with the wild horse training program, it will benefit them. Working with horses completely changes a person inside.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mary Dye, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Callan, Chopp, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stokesbary, Stonier, Tharinger and Wilcox.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) A version of this bill died a few years ago due to COVID-19 and its fiscal impact. The feasibility study required in this version of the bill will allow Washington to negotiate terms with the federal Bureau of Land Management since that agency will be providing much of the funding for the wild horse program, thus making this program affordable to operate in the state.

Horses are nonjudgmental and do not care about a person's actions or history. They can teach a person empathy and confidence as well as emotional and life skills that will be invaluable upon an incarcerated person's release. This will provide incarcerated individuals hope and responsibility as they transition back into the community and thus reduce recidivism. Lastly, there is currently a statewide shortage of farriers and agricultural workers which can be improved with the creation of a wild horse correctional industry program.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mary Dye, prime sponsor; and Ella Menter.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.