

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6231

As of January 23, 2024

Title: An act relating to prohibiting the use of hostile architecture elements for publicly accessible buildings or real property.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the use of hostile architecture elements for publicly accessible buildings or real property.

Sponsors: Senators Lovelett, Kuderer, Nguyen and Nobles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government, Land Use & Tribal Affairs: 1/23/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits cities, towns, code cities, and counties from installing or constructing hostile architecture elements to restrict the use of any public space by people experiencing homelessness.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAND USE & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Staff: Maggie Douglas (786-7279)

Background: A city, town, or county may enact ordinances regulating the use of land and zoning certain development and activities within its jurisdiction. Such regulations generally include:

- the location, height, construction and size of buildings for residence, industry, trade, and other purposes;
- the size of yards, open spaces, lots, and tracts;
- the density of population;
- the set-back of buildings; and
- the subdivision and development of land.

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.

A city, town, or county may review public and private projects for their compliance with local design standards, including a project's aesthetic, architectural, or urban design quality and its compatibility with nearby development.

Summary of Bill: Cities, towns, and counties may not install or construct any hostile architecture elements designed to restrict the use of public space by people experiencing homelessness.

Hostile architecture means any building or structure designed or intended to prevent people experiencing homelessness from sitting or lying on the building or structure at street level. Hostile architecture does not include design elements intended to prevent individuals from skateboarding or rollerblading or to prevent vehicles from entering certain areas.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Anti-homeless architecture is an urban design strategy that uses elements of the built environment to purposely guide or restrict behavior. Living unsheltered is not a choice but is a result of excessive rent increases, lack of behavioral health resources, and lack of affordable housing. Taxpayer dollars should be used to empower communities and address the root causes of homelessness rather than perpetuate the cycle of homelessness.

OTHER: Cities have been successful in getting people into permanent housing when they were otherwise living in dangerous situations. Safety is a driving force of those investments. This bill does not apply to state owned land. The definitions within the bill need to be revised.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Liz Lovelett, Prime Sponsor; Nicholas Warren Jeffreys, N/A; Michele Thomas, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

OTHER: Carl Schroeder, Association of Washington Cities.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.