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**SENATE BILL 5550**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Liiias, Randall, Valdez, Lovick, C. Wilson, Lovelett, Kauffman, Shewmake, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Nguyen, Nobles, Robinson, and Van De Wege

Read first time 01/25/23. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to addressing workforce development issues,  
2 including cultural issues, at the Washington state ferries;  
3 reenacting and amending RCW 47.60.005; and adding a new section to  
4 chapter 47.60 RCW.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 47.60  
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The legislature finds that the maritime sector in Washington  
9 state is currently facing historic labor challenges. The legislature  
10 further finds that the Washington state ferry system is an essential  
11 component of the transportation system. Therefore, the legislature  
12 intends that Washington state ferries implement the recommendations  
13 of the joint transportation committee study on workforce planning,  
14 completed in December 2022.

15 (2) Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal strategy to  
16 implement diversity, equity, and inclusion directives to address  
17 issues including, but not limited to, recruitment, employee  
18 development, retention, and agency branding for workforce marketing  
19 materials. The strategy may address specific goals and objectives of  
20 diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, training and development of

1 staff, and key performance indicators to track effectiveness of the  
2 strategy.

3 (3) (a) On an annual basis, Washington state ferries shall conduct  
4 an employee survey of employees' feedback on workplace conditions  
5 either via the department-wide survey or utilizing a third-party  
6 consultant. The results of the survey shall be used at a minimum to:

7 (i) Perform an in-depth cultural assessment;

8 (ii) Identify any issues of concern among the Washington state  
9 ferries workforce; and

10 (iii) Form the basis of an action plan to remediate any cultural  
11 issues identified.

12 (b) Washington state ferries shall submit a summary of survey  
13 results and corresponding action planning to address cultural issues  
14 to the transportation committees of the legislature and the office of  
15 financial management at the time of Washington state ferries'  
16 biennial budget submissions, beginning with the 2025-2027 submission.

17 (4) Washington state ferries shall continuously seek methods to  
18 improve workforce development and career advancement for all  
19 employees with a focus on vessel engine room and deck, terminal, and  
20 Eagle Harbor maintenance facility tradespeople. In consultation with  
21 labor partners, Washington state ferries shall develop programs for  
22 employees to gain maritime credentials and marine pilotage required  
23 by the United States coast guard, as well as transferring knowledge  
24 through formalized mentorship, work shadow, or apprenticeship  
25 programs. Washington state ferries shall adopt a formal policy to  
26 assist applicants to gain required United States coast guard  
27 documentation and maritime credentialing necessary for entry level  
28 positions. Assistance to perspective employees may include both  
29 financial and technical assistance.

30 (5) When possible, Washington state ferries shall partner with  
31 maritime academies and training facilities to offer instruction,  
32 including electronic learning, internships, or apprenticeships, to  
33 current or perspective employees.

34 (6) Washington state ferries shall continuously evaluate  
35 management practices concerning recruitment and hiring, staffing  
36 levels, scheduling practices, compensation, and agency technology  
37 needs, to optimize system and administrative performance. The  
38 evaluation must include a strategy to develop or modify a staffing  
39 model to forecast staffing needs and succession planning for future  
40 biennia and set a target level of operational overtime.

1 (7) At the time of Washington state ferries' biennial budget  
2 submissions, beginning with the 2025-2027 submission, Washington  
3 state ferries shall report staffing progress for deck, terminal,  
4 maintenance shop, and engine room employees, identifying:

5 (a) The approximate number of employees eligible for promotion;

6 (b) The number of employees eligible for retirement;

7 (c) The number of employees who have utilized on-the-job programs  
8 to gain maritime credentials or fulfill marine pilotage requirements;  
9 and

10 (d) A forecast of all staffing needs and changes for the  
11 subsequent biennia.

12 **Sec. 2.** RCW 47.60.005 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 14 s 1 are each  
13 reenacted and amended to read as follows:

14 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter  
15 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

16 (1) "Adaptive management" means a systematic process for  
17 continually improving management policies and practices by learning  
18 from the outcomes of operational programs.

19 (2) "Capital plan" means the state ferry system plan developed by  
20 the department as described in RCW 47.06.050(2), reviewed by the  
21 commission, and reported to the transportation committees of the  
22 legislature by the department.

23 (3) "Capital project" has the same meaning as used in budget  
24 instructions developed by the office of financial management.

25 (4) "Commission" means the transportation commission created in  
26 RCW 47.01.051.

27 (5) "Fixed price contract" means a contract that requires the  
28 contractor to deliver a specified project for a set price. Change  
29 orders on fixed price contracts are allowable but should be used on a  
30 very limited basis.

31 (6) "Improvement project" has the same meaning as in the budget  
32 instructions developed by the office of financial management. If the  
33 budget instructions do not define improvement project, then it has  
34 the same meaning as "program project" in the budget instructions. If  
35 a project meets both the improvement project and preservation project  
36 definitions in this section it must be defined as an improvement  
37 project. New vessel acquisitions must be defined as improvement  
38 projects.

1 (7) "Life-cycle cost analysis" means an analysis of the full net  
2 present value cost of constructing and operating a vessel over its  
3 life span, including capital costs, financing costs, operation and  
4 maintenance costs, decommissioning costs, and variable costs  
5 including fuel.

6 (8) "Life-cycle cost model" means that portion of a capital asset  
7 inventory system which, among other things, is used to estimate  
8 future preservation needs.

9 (9) "Maintenance cost" has the same meaning as used in budget  
10 instructions developed by the office of financial management.

11 (10) "Preservation project" has the same meaning as used in  
12 budget instructions developed by the office of financial management.

13 (11) "Route" means all ferry sailings from one location to  
14 another, such as the Seattle to Bainbridge route or the Port Townsend  
15 to Keystone route.

16 (12) "Sailing" means an individual ferry sailing for a specific  
17 route, such as the 5:00 p.m. sailing from Seattle to Bremerton.

18 (13) "Travel shed" means one or more ferry routes with distinct  
19 characteristics as determined by the department.

20 (14) "Washington state ferries" means the ferry division within  
21 the department, as described in RCW 47.60.015.

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