
SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5780

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Torres, Dhingra, Padden, Boehnke, L. Wilson, Braun, Frame, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Lovick, Mullet, Nguyen, Warnick, and J. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/05/24.

1 AN ACT Relating to encouraging participation in public defense
2 and prosecution professions; adding new sections to chapter 2.70 RCW;
3 adding new sections to chapter 43.101 RCW; and creating a new
4 section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the lack of
7 availability of public defense attorneys and deputy prosecutors is an
8 increasing problem in Washington and neighboring states which
9 threatens the ability of court systems to process criminal filings,
10 particularly within rural areas. The legislature intends to encourage
11 law students to enter public defense practice and prosecution and to
12 remove barriers to practice in underserved areas and rural areas of
13 the state.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2.70 RCW
15 to read as follows:

16 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
17 specific purpose, the office of public defense shall administer a law
18 student rural public defense program. The program shall coordinate
19 with one or more law schools to place law students who are eligible
20 to practice as a licensed legal intern under Washington state

1 admission and practice rule 9 and/or recent law school graduates as
2 legal interns with experienced public defense attorneys located in
3 underserved areas and rural areas of the state. The program must
4 allow the intern to gain real-world public defense experience under
5 the mentorship of the experienced public defense attorney, including
6 active representation and litigation opportunities, with the purpose
7 of encouraging the intern to consider, or not be deterred from
8 pursuing, employment opportunities in public defense in underserved
9 areas and rural areas of Washington state. The internship may be
10 structured to correspond with time periods relevant to the academic
11 calendar. Eligible internship placements shall include government and
12 nonprofit public defense agencies as well as private firms that
13 contract to provide public defense services.

14 (2) Contracts established by the office of public defense under
15 this section shall include monthly compensation and housing stipends
16 for program participants. Contracts may include partial reimbursement
17 for the supervising attorney.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 2.70 RCW
19 to read as follows:

20 Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
21 specific purpose, the office of public defense shall expand the
22 capacity of its criminal defense training academy program to train
23 practitioners who are new to public defense. The program must include
24 and prioritize training for practitioners in underserved areas and
25 rural areas of the state. The program must offer intensive trial
26 skill development, incorporate public defense best practices and
27 applicable standards, and offer networking opportunities. Trainings
28 may incorporate in-person, remote, and recorded resources. By June
29 30, 2026, the office of public defense shall expand program offerings
30 to also provide training to public defense practitioners who are
31 seeking to achieve advanced qualifications.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.101
33 RCW to read as follows:

34 Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
35 specific purpose, the criminal justice training commission shall
36 provide trial skills training for practitioners who are new to
37 prosecution, or contract with an entity that serves prosecuting
38 attorneys in Washington to provide that training. The program must

1 include and prioritize training for practitioners in underserved
2 areas and rural areas of the state. The program must offer intensive
3 trial skill development, incorporate prosecution best practices,
4 provide training related to ethical duties of prosecutors, and offer
5 networking opportunities. Trainings may incorporate in-person,
6 remote, and recorded resources. By June 30, 2026, the criminal
7 justice training commission, or its grantee who serves prosecuting
8 attorneys in Washington, shall expand a trial skills program to
9 include advanced trial skills training.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.101
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
13 specific purpose, the commission shall administer a law student rural
14 public prosecution program, or contract with a statewide entity which
15 represents prosecuting attorneys to run the program. The program
16 shall coordinate with one or more law schools to place law students
17 who are eligible to practice as a licensed legal intern under
18 Washington state admission and practice rule 9 and/or recent law
19 school graduates as legal interns with prosecuting attorneys located
20 in underserved areas and rural areas of the state. The program must
21 allow the intern to gain real-world prosecution experience under the
22 mentorship of the experienced prosecuting attorney or their deputy,
23 including active litigation opportunities, with the purpose of
24 encouraging the intern to consider, or not be deterred from pursuing,
25 employment opportunities in prosecution in underserved areas and
26 rural areas of Washington state. The internship may be structured to
27 correspond with time periods relevant to the academic calendar.

28 (2) Contracts established under this section shall include
29 monthly compensation and housing stipends for program participants.
30 Contracts may include partial reimbursement for the supervising
31 attorney.

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