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**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1628**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Bronoske, Griffey, Schmidt, Simmons, Nance, Davis, and Salahuddin

AN ACT Relating to the creation of the fire service policy board; adding a new section to chapter 43.44 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that Washington state's fire service has evolved significantly over the past quarter century. Since the mid-1990s, fire departments across the state have taken on more responsibilities than ever previously envisioned. In addition to fire suppression, Washington's fire service has evolved to provide basic and advanced life support, educate the public on fire prevention, perform technical rescue, respond to hazardous materials incidents, provide all-hazards response to wildland fires, natural disasters, and pandemics and infectious disease outbreaks, and more. During this same time, Washington's population has grown by more than two million residents.

The legislature further finds that the fire service delivery work group established in 2023 and comprised of stakeholders from the entirety of the fire service in Washington state highlighted that the state fire marshal's office has been significantly deprioritized and underfunded for the last 10 years or longer. Over the last 10 years, just 3.4 percent of the state fire marshal's office policy level budget requests were funded, while the fire service training account's year-end balance declined $6.2 million over the last 12 years due to insufficient funding. These funding shortfalls have resulted in several statutory mandates being unperformed, including fire investigations, which compromise preventative efforts to reduce fire occurrences and fire impacts, ultimately compromising community and environmental safety. Further, inadequate funding for firefighter training creates unequal access to training opportunities, especially in rural and economically vulnerable areas that cannot afford to travel to the training academy. Inaccessible firefighter training risks the safety of historically marginalized communities, their firefighters, and natural environments.

The legislature acknowledges the breadth and depth of the services the public expects, and that the fire service delivers, to protect life, property, and the environment. Therefore, the legislature intends to establish the fire service policy board to ensure that the state director of fire protection has the necessary authority and support to guarantee the continued provision of comprehensive fire service training, fire prevention, investigations, and all-hazards response for all of Washington state.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.44 RCW to read as follows:

(1) There is created the Washington state fire service policy board to generally advise the state director of fire protection on all matters related to the purview of the state fire marshal's office. This includes, but is not limited to, developing recommendations regarding agency budget requests and developing strategies to enhance the safe and effective delivery of fire service training and resources.

(2) The fire service policy board consists of:

(a) The president of the Washington state council of firefighters, or the president's designee;

(b) The president of the Washington state firefighters' association, or the president's designee;

(c) The executive director of the Washington state fire commissioners association, or the director's designee;

(d) The executive director of the Washington fire chiefs association, or the director's designee; and

(e) The president of the Washington state fire marshals association, or the president's designee.

(3) The members of the fire service policy board shall designate an administrative chair to facilitate meetings. The board shall convene quarterly, at a minimum, as well as subject to the call of the administrative chair for any purpose that directly relates to the duties set forth in subsection (1) of this section or as is otherwise requested by the state director of fire protection or the administrative chair.

(4) In performing the duties under this section, the fire service policy board is encouraged to seek input from representatives of industries licensed or regulated by the state fire marshal's office, agencies, and other organizations, as appropriate. The fire service policy board may create ad-hoc, voluntary advisory committees as needed. Members of an advisory committee and individuals serving in an advisory capacity may not be reimbursed for expenses or receive compensation or other funding, for activities performed under this subsection.

(5) Each member of the fire service policy board serves without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses as authorized in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(6) The members of the fire service policy board, or individuals acting on their behalf, are immune from civil liability for official acts performed in the course of their duties.

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