S-0396.1

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**SENATE BILL 5089**

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

**By** Senators Chapman and Short

AN ACT Relating to funding rural county coroners and medical examiners; amending RCW 36.16.030; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes that the most rural counties in the state often face unique revenue challenges and, as a result, are least able to immediately absorb additional costs imposed by new legal requirements. In order to assist these counties with additional independent coroner costs that will impact them starting in 2025, the legislature intends to fully fund these costs for a period of six fiscal years to allow these rural counties to prepare for and fund at the county level these costs starting in 2031.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.16.030 and 2021 c 127 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

Except as provided elsewhere in this section, in every county there shall be elected from among the qualified voters of the county a county assessor, a county auditor, a county clerk, a county coroner, three county commissioners, a county prosecuting attorney, a county sheriff, and a county treasurer, except that in each county with a population of less than forty thousand the county legislative authority may determine that no coroner shall be elected and instead appoint a coroner. In a county with a population of two hundred fifty thousand or more, the county legislative authority may replace the office of coroner with a medical examiner system and appoint a medical examiner as specified in RCW 36.24.190. Any county may enter into an interlocal agreement under chapter 39.34 RCW with an adjoining county for the provision of coroner or medical examiner services. A noncharter county may have five county commissioners as provided in RCW 36.32.010 and 36.32.055 through 36.32.0558. For fiscal years 2025 through 2030, the legislature shall appropriate and disburse, to counties with a population of under 40,000, sufficient funds to cover the costs of any new or increased responsibilities under this section.

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