

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5139

As of January 21, 2025

Title: An act relating to reentry council.

Brief Description: Concerning reentry council.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Frame, Hasegawa and Nobles; by request of Department of Commerce.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 1/21/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the membership of the Statewide Reentry Council from 15 to 20 members.
- Allows eligible members to receive compensation for Statewide Reentry Council activities.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Kelsey-anne Fung (786-7479)

Background: Statewide Reentry Council. Legislation passed in 2016 created the Washington Statewide Reentry Council (Council) within the Department of Commerce (Commerce) for the purpose of promoting successful reentry of individuals after incarceration. Through the executive director appointed by the Council, Commerce administers the Council by providing the Council and its executive director use of Commerce's facilities, and managing grants and other funds received, used, and disbursed by the Council.

Membership. The Council consists of 15 members appointed by the Governor, which must

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include:

- representatives of:
 - the Department of Corrections;
 - the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration;
 - a statewide organization representing community and technical colleges;
 - a statewide organization representing law enforcement interests;
 - a statewide organization representing the interests of crime victims;
 - a statewide organization representing prosecutors;
 - a statewide organization representing public defenders;
 - a statewide or local organization representing businesses and employers;
 - housing providers; and
 - faith-based organizations or communities;
- at least two persons with experience reentering the community after incarceration;
- two other community leaders; and
- at least one position for a person with a background in tribal affairs.

When making appointments, the Governor must consider:

- the racial and ethnic background of applicants in order for the membership to reflect the diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds of all those who are incarcerated in the state;
- the gender of applicants in order for the membership to reflect the gender diversity of all those who are incarcerated in the state;
- the geographic location of all applicants in order for the membership to represent the different geographic regions of the state; and
- the experiences and background of all applicants relating to the incarcerated population.

Duties. Duties of the Council include:

- advising the Legislature and the Governor on issues relating to reentry and reintegration of individuals;
- reviewing, studying, and making policy and funding recommendations on issues related to reentry, reintegration, and recidivism of individuals;
- applying for, receiving, using, and leveraging public and private grants and appropriated funds to establish, manage, and promote initiatives and programs related to successful reentry and reintegration of individuals;
- contracting for services in order to carry out initiatives and programs;
- adopting policies and procedures to facilitate the orderly administration of initiatives and programs;
- creating committees and subcommittees; and
- creating and consulting with advisory groups comprised of nonmembers.

The Council must solicit input and participation from stakeholders interested in reducing recidivism, promoting public safety, and improving community conditions for people reentering the community. The Council must consult the four legislative caucuses,

Governor, local governments, educators, mental health and substance abuse providers, behavioral health organizations, managed care organizations, city and county jails, the Department of Corrections, specialty courts, persons with expertise in evidence-based and research-based reentry practices, and persons with criminal histories and their families.

The Council must meet at least four times each year. Seven members of the Council constitute a quorum. Members must serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The Council must submit to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature a report by December 1st of its first year of operation and a full report every two years thereafter.

Compensation of Members of Part-Time Boards and Commissions. Any part-time board, commission, council, committee, or similar group which is established by the executive, legislative, or judicial branch to participate in state government and which functions primarily in an advisory, coordinating, or planning capacity must be identified as a class one group.

Subject to available funding, an agency may provide a stipend to individuals who are low income or have direct lived experience to support their participation in class one groups when the agency determines that their participation is desirable to implement the principles of equity, provided that the individuals are not otherwise compensated for their attendance at meetings. Stipends are limited to \$200 for each day during which the member attends an official meeting or performs statutorily prescribed duties. Individuals eligible for stipends are eligible for reasonable allowances for child and adult care reimbursement, lodging, and travel expenses in addition to stipend amounts.

Summary of Bill: The membership of the Council is increased from 15 to 20 members. Representatives from the Health Care Authority, Department of Social and Health Services, and the Employment Security Department, as well as two community members who are currently incarcerated, are added as members of the Council.

Language requiring members to serve without compensation is removed. Instead, members may receive compensation for their participation in a class one group.

The threshold for a quorum is increased from 7 to 11 members.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: It is critical to remove barriers to prevent or discourage participation from persons with lived experience. The Council works to improve reentry outcomes, increase public safety, and build systems that are more humane and restorative, and it is important to have people on the council impacted by the Council's efforts. By having additional representatives and community members represented, it will ensure those who provide and those who receive services are included as partners.

Reentry begins at reception. This bill will provide a much needed seat at the table for voices of people who are currently incarcerated, which will help guide the work of the Council. The increase in state agency partnership will help build more restorative systems.

Systems are not good at helping people get out and stay out of prison. The system fails to consistently include the perspective of people who are most affected by the problems it was meant to address. To address this failure, it is critical to meaningfully include people most impacted in the system and make sure they are aware of the Council's work.

OTHER: Currently incarcerated individuals can help identify gaps in programs and ensure DOC has specific support services as incarcerated individuals are working toward release. 97 percent of incarcerated individuals will release to the community. Currently incarcerated individuals offer a unique perspective on anticipated challenges facing release. Ensuring those most affected by reentry policies and programs have a voice in their development strengthens the mission of council and leads to more effective programming, better outcomes, and stronger communities for those impacted by the justice system.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Janel McFeat, Statewide Reentry Council; Esther Matthews, Statewide Reentry Council; Candice Baughman.

OTHER: Danielle Armbruster, Department of Corrections.

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