
HOUSE BILL 1945

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Graham, Walsh, Griffey, Jacobsen, Burnett, Caldier, and Chase

Read first time 02/11/25. Referred to Committee on Community Safety.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing an office of the crime victims
2 ombuds; adding a new chapter to Title 43 RCW; and providing an
3 expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The office of the crime victims ombuds
6 is created. The department of commerce shall contract with a private,
7 independent nonprofit organization to provide crime victims ombuds
8 services. The department of commerce shall designate, by a
9 competitive bidding process, the nonprofit organization that will
10 contract to operate the ombuds. The selection process must include
11 consultation of stakeholders in the development of the request for
12 proposals and evaluation of bids. The selected organization must have
13 experience and the capacity to effectively communicate regarding
14 crime victims' issues with policymakers, stakeholders, and the
15 general public and must be prepared and able to provide all program
16 and staff support necessary, directly or through subcontracts, to
17 carry out all duties of the office.

18 (2) The contracting organization and its subcontractors, if any,
19 are not state agencies or departments, but instead are private,
20 independent entities operating under contract with the state.

1 (3) The governor or state may not revoke the designation of the
2 organization contracted to provide the services of the ombuds except
3 upon a showing of neglect of duty, misconduct, or inability to
4 perform duties. In the event that the designation is revoked, the
5 department of commerce shall contract with another private,
6 independent nonprofit organization to provide crime victims ombuds
7 services.

8 (4) The department of commerce shall ensure that the ombuds staff
9 has access to sufficient training or experience with issues relating
10 to crime victims and the program and staff support necessary to
11 enable the ombuds to effectively protect the interests of crime
12 victims. The office of the crime victims ombuds shall have the powers
13 and duties to do the following:

14 (a) Provide information as appropriate on the rights of persons
15 receiving crime victims' services, and on the procedures for
16 providing these services;

17 (b) Refer crime victims to the appropriate element of the
18 criminal and juvenile justice systems or victim assistance programs,
19 or both, when services are requested by crime victims or are
20 necessary as determined by the ombuds;

21 (c) Investigate, upon its own initiative or upon receipt of a
22 complaint, acts related to a crime victim alleged to be contrary to
23 the criminal and juvenile justice systems or victim assistance
24 programs, however, the ombuds may decline to investigate any
25 complaint, but must give a reason in writing;

26 (d) Monitor the procedures as established, implemented, and
27 practiced by the department to carry out its responsibilities in the
28 delivery of services to crime victims;

29 (e) Recommend changes in the procedures for addressing the needs
30 of crime victims;

31 (f) Establish procedures to protect the confidentiality of
32 records and sensitive information to ensure that the identity of any
33 complainant or crime victim will not be disclosed without the written
34 consent of the complainant or crime victim, or upon court order;

35 (g) Maintain independence and authority within the bounds of the
36 duties prescribed by this chapter, insofar as this independence and
37 authority is exercised in good faith and within the scope of
38 contract; and

39 (h) Carry out such other activities as determined by the
40 department of commerce within the scope of this chapter.

1 (5) For the purposes of this section, "crime" and "victim" have
2 the same meaning as in chapter 7.69 RCW.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The department of commerce's office of
4 crime victims advocacy shall conduct a survey and analysis of the
5 appropriate placement outside of state government of the office of
6 the crime victims ombuds. The survey required shall ascertain how the
7 contracted placement of the office will most effectively allow it to
8 meet its responsibilities under this chapter. The survey shall
9 include, but is not limited to, a complete assessment of how
10 independently contracting the program outside state government will
11 provide the office with an effective means for resolving complaints
12 and building program accountability.

13 (2) In completing the analysis, the office of crime victims
14 advocacy shall survey existing crime victim advocacy and service
15 provider agencies regarding how best to increase awareness of the
16 needs of crime victims and better coordinate delivery services. The
17 survey shall further examine whether the established rights of
18 victims, survivors, and witnesses of crimes have led to consistent
19 advocacy on behalf of crime victims within state government.

20 (3) A draft of the findings shall be submitted to the governor
21 and the legislature by November 30, 2026, and the final findings,
22 conclusions, and recommendations shall be submitted in a report to
23 the governor and the legislature no later than December 30, 2026.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The provisions of this chapter are in
25 addition to and do not in any manner limit or affect any other
26 provisions of law under which any remedy or right of appeal is
27 provided for any person, or any procedure is provided for the inquiry
28 into or investigation of any matter. The powers conferred on the
29 office of the crime victims ombuds may be exercised notwithstanding
30 any provision of law to the effect that any administrative action
31 shall be final or unappealable.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This chapter expires July 1, 2027.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act
34 constitute a new chapter in Title 43 RCW.

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