

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1720

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As of March 23, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to healthy housing.

**Brief Description:** Concerning healthy housing.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Robinson, Peterson, Stanford, Riccelli, Gregerson, Senn, Appleton, Ortiz-Self, Tarleton, Jinkins and Santos.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/10/15, 74-23.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 3/19/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

**Background:** Low-Income Residential Weatherization Program. In 1987 the Legislature established the Low-Income Residential Weatherization Program (Program) which is administered by the Department of Commerce (Commerce). This program seeks to achieve financial and energy savings for low-income households and other energy consumers by directing public and private weatherization resources from sponsoring entities or other sources to low-income households. Low-income is defined as a household whose income does not exceed 80 percent of median household income, adjusted for household size, for the county in which the dwelling unit to be weatherized is located.

Funding sources include the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) within the United States Department of Energy (USDOE), the Bonneville Power Administration, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program within the United States Health and Human Services Department. Commerce also receives state funds, which are matched by utility companies that sell gas and electric heat.

Weatherization services provided under the Program include energy and resource conservation, energy efficiency improvements, repairs, indoor quality improvements, health and safety improvements, and client education. Commerce solicits proposals for low-income weatherization programs from potential sponsors and allocates funding.

USDOE – WAP and Weatherization Plus Health Initiative. USDOE's WAP was created in 1976 to assist low-income families who lacked resources to invest in energy efficiency. WAP

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also plays a role in ensuring the health and safety of low-income homes. The USDOE-funded Weatherization Plus Health Initiative connects the WAP network with providers of healthy homes services. Healthy homes services include lead hazard control; remediation of asthma triggers, including moisture, mold, and pests; reduction in exposure to radon and other toxic chemicals; and prevention of injuries caused by old or dilapidated housing.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development – Healthy Homes Initiative.

In 1999 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created the Healthy Homes Initiative. The Healthy Homes program addresses multiple childhood diseases and injuries in the home and addresses a variety of environmental health and safety concerns including mold, lead, allergens, asthma, carbon monoxide, home safety, pesticides, and radon.

**Summary of Bill:** Projects that improve the health and safety of residents are added to the types of projects that receive prioritized funding from the Program. Commerce must also develop policies that improve the health and safety of residents in homes and building requiring improvements.

Healthy housing is defined as increasing the health and safety of a home by integrating energy efficiency activities and indoor environmental measures, consistent with the Weatherization Plus Health Initiative of USDOE and the healthy housing principles adopted by HUD.

Sponsors submitting proposals under the Program may propose to use grant awards and matching funds to make healthy housing improvements to homes undergoing weatherization.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Education of risks and hazards can only go so far. The changes families need to make to have a healthy home are not high priced but are often out of reach for low-income households. Small changes like installing a vent in a bathroom or tearing out a moldy carpet are small things we can do that result in huge changes for families. These changes can help with asthma triggers. Washington is at the forefront nationally with pairing weatherization with healthy homes. There is a trained workforce available in every county. These changes make homes healthier and safer.

OTHER: There are trained professionals prepared to address health issues while also doing weatherization, which for the families can result in fewer lost work days and trips to the emergency room, among other things.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Robinson, prime sponsor, Mark Schofield, Opportunity Council; John Davies, Building Performance Center, Opportunity Council; Robin Evans-Agnew, Lani Su, Puget Sound Asthma Coalition.

OTHER: Shawn Collins, The Energy Project, Associate Director.

**Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.