

E2SHB 1277 - S COMM AMD
By Committee on Ways & Means

1 On page 7, after line 14, insert the following:

2 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1)(a) The legislature finds that
3 affordable housing, housing instability, and homelessness are
4 persistent and increasing problems throughout the state. Despite
5 significant increases in financial resources by the federal, state,
6 and local governments to address these problems, homelessness and the
7 risk of becoming homeless has worsened in Washington since the
8 legislature authorized the first homeless housing document recording
9 surcharge in 2005. The number of unsheltered homeless encampments in
10 greenbelts, under bridges, and on our streets is a visible reminder
11 that the current system is not working.

12 (b) The legislature finds that the COVID-19 pandemic has
13 exacerbated and shed new light on the state's homelessness problems
14 and forced communities and providers to reexamine the types and
15 delivery of housing and services to individuals and families who are
16 homeless or at risk of homelessness. As a result of the changing
17 conditions COVID-19 created, the federal government has provided an
18 infusion of funding for housing and services for homelessness
19 populations in its COVID-19 relief bills to pursue different
20 strategies to improve outcomes. Moreover, there are various proposals
21 to increase state funding to address housing insecurity and
22 homelessness, including this act to impose an additional document
23 recording fee to fund an eviction prevention rental assistance
24 program and other services to persons at risk or experiencing
25 homelessness.

26 (c) The legislature also finds that there are many causes of
27 homelessness and housing instability, including: (i) A shortage of
28 affordable housing; (ii) local land use planning and property
29 management policies that discourage the development of private sector
30 housing stock to serve low and extremely low-income households; (iii)
31 unemployment and lack of education and job skills to acquire an
32 adequate wage job; (iv) mental health, developmental, and physical

1 disabilities; (v) chemical and alcohol dependency; and (vi) family
2 instability and conflict. The legislature intends to provide for an
3 examination of the economic, social, and health causes of current and
4 expected patterns of housing instability and homelessness, and to
5 secure a common understanding of the contribution each has to the
6 current crisis. The legislature intends for this examination to
7 result in a widely accepted strategy for identifying how best to
8 address homelessness in ways that: (A) Address the root causes of the
9 problem; (B) clearly assign responsibilities of state and local
10 government to address those causes; (C) support local control and
11 provision of services at the local level to address specific
12 community needs, recognizing each community must play a part in the
13 solution; (D) respect property owner rights and encourage private
14 sector involvement in solutions and service; and (E) develop pathways
15 to permanent housing solutions and associated services to break the
16 cycle of housing insecurity and homelessness.

17 (2) (a) The department of commerce must contract with the William
18 D. Ruckelshaus center to conduct an examination of trends affecting,
19 and policies guiding, the housing and services provided to
20 individuals and families who are or at risk of homelessness in
21 Washington. The center must also facilitate meetings and discussions
22 to develop and implement a long-term strategy to improve services and
23 outcomes for persons at risk or experiencing homelessness and develop
24 pathways to permanent housing solutions.

25 (b) In fulfilling the requirements of this section, the center
26 must work and consult with (i) willing participants representing
27 tribal and local governments, local providers of housing and services
28 for homeless populations, advocates and stakeholders representing the
29 interests of homeless populations, mental health and substance abuse
30 professionals, representatives of the business community and other
31 organizations, and other representatives the center determines is a
32 necessary participant to examine these issues; (ii) a group of
33 legislators consisting of one member from each of the two largest
34 caucuses in the senate and in the house of representatives appointed
35 by the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of
36 representatives, respectively; and (iii) three representatives of the
37 executive branch appointed by the governor.

38 (c) (i) The center must conduct fact-finding and stakeholder
39 discussions with participants identified in (b) of this subsection.
40 These discussions must identify stakeholder concerns, barriers,

1 opportunities, and desired principles for a long-term strategy to
2 improve the outcomes and services for persons at risk or experiencing
3 homelessness and develop pathways to permanent housing solutions.

4 (ii) The center must conduct fact-finding and stakeholder
5 discussions with participants identified in (b) of this subsection to
6 identify root causes of housing instability and homelessness within
7 Washington state. This fact-finding should address root causes
8 demographically within subpopulations of persons at risk or
9 experiencing homelessness such as veterans and persons suffering from
10 mental health or substance abuse issues. The fact-finding should also
11 address root causes that may differ geographically or regionally. The
12 fact-finding must identify existing statutory and regulatory issues
13 that impede efforts to address root causes of housing instability and
14 homelessness within Washington state.

15 (iii) The center must issue two reports of its fact-finding
16 efforts and stakeholder discussions to the governor and the
17 appropriate committees of the house of representatives and the
18 senate. One report on the subjects covered in (c)(i) of this
19 subsection is due December 1, 2021, and one on the subjects covered
20 in (c)(ii) of this subsection is due December 1, 2022.

21 (d) The center must facilitate discussions between the
22 stakeholders identified in this subsection (2) for the purposes of
23 identifying options and recommendations to develop and implement a
24 long-term strategy to improve the outcomes and service for persons at
25 risk or experiencing homelessness and develop pathways to permanent
26 housing solutions, including the manner and amount in which the state
27 funds homelessness housing and services and performance measures that
28 must be achieved to receive state funding. A report on this effort is
29 due to the governor and the appropriate committees of the house of
30 representatives and the senate by December 1, 2023."

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31 On page 1, line 4 of the title, after "RCW;" strike the remainder
32 of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter 43.185C RCW;
33 and creating a new section."

EFFECT: Directs the department of commerce to contract with the William D. Ruckelshaus center to conduct an examination of trends affecting, and policies guiding, the housing and services provided to individuals and families who are or at risk of homelessness in Washington. The center must also facilitate meetings and discussions with legislators, members of the executive branch, and stakeholders to develop and implement a long-term strategy to improve services and outcomes for persons at risk or experiencing homelessness and develop pathways to permanent housing solutions. Fact-finding reports are due December 1, 2021, and December 1, 2022, with a final report on a strategy including an examination of the manner and amount which the state funds homelessness housing and services and performance measures that must be achieved to receive state funding.

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