

ESSB 5998 – 2026 Supplemental Operating Budget

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 907.** A new section is added to 2025 c 424 (uncodified) to read as follows:

JOINT LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON BUDGET TRANSPARENCY AND FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

(1) A joint legislative-executive committee on budget transparency and fiscal sustainability is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(a) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate, appointed by the president of the senate;

(b) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house;

(c) The director of the office of financial management;

(d) The executive director of the economic and revenue forecast council;

(e) The executive director of the caseload forecast council;

(f) The chief impact officer from the office of the governor;

(g) Two chief financial officers representing large state agencies administering forecasted programs, appointed by the governor;

(h) Two business representatives, jointly appointed by the president of the senate and the speaker of the house from a list provided by the Washington roundtable; and

(i) Two labor representatives, jointly appointed by the president of the senate and the speaker of the house from a list provided by the Washington state labor council.

(2) The joint committee shall be co-chaired by three of its members: A member of the senate designated by the president of the senate, a member of the house designated by the speaker of the house, and the director of the office of financial management. Staff support for legislative members of the joint committee shall be provided by senate committee services and the house office of program research. As the co-chairs may collectively agree and reasonably request, additional assistance may be provided by the office of financial management, the economic and revenue forecast council, the caseload forecast council, the legislative evaluation and accountability program committee, the office of equity, and your Washington. These agencies shall enter into any data sharing agreements that are necessary for the work of the joint committee in a timely manner.

(3)(a) The co-chairs shall jointly request technical assistance from a nonpartisan organization working to strengthen state government with specific technical expertise in state fiscal policy to provide technical assistance and make recommendations for promoting budget transparency, fiscal sustainability, program accountability, and equitable outcomes.

(b) The co-chairs shall jointly request that the organization conduct its work over a two-year period.

(i) During the first phase, the organization shall review: Revenue growth projections and spending assumptions in the four-year budget outlook; statutory cost drivers and their effect on carryforward and maintenance levels; and relevant budget practices in other states.

(ii) During the second phase, the organization shall review: Management staffing levels, administrative overhead costs, and performance management practices; public reporting tools and data accessibility; and relevant budget practices in other states.

(c) The co-chairs shall jointly request that the organization also:

(i) Participate in meetings of the joint committee;

(ii) Conduct interviews of members of the joint committee, fiscal staff for the house appropriations committee and the senate ways and means committee, staff for the legislative evaluation and accountability program committee, and other stakeholders as part of its work;

(iii) Provide members of the joint committee with periodic updates, with progress reviews, preliminary findings, next steps, and opportunities for feedback;

(iv) Submit written reports of its findings and recommendations to the joint committee, the house appropriations committee, and the senate ways and means committee for the first phase by November 15, 2026, and for the second phase by November 15, 2027; and

(v) Present its findings and recommendations at meetings of the joint committee for the first phase by December 1, 2026, and for the second phase by December 1, 2027.

(4) The senate and the house of representatives may contract with additional persons who have specific technical expertise if the co-chairs collectively agree that such expertise is necessary for the work of the joint committee. The senate and the house of representatives may enter into such a contract only if an appropriation is specifically provided for this purpose.

(5) The co-chairs shall jointly convene up to three meetings of the joint committee per year to review the scope of work to be conducted by the nonprofit organization described in subsection (3)(a) of this section, receive presentations on the organization's findings and recommendations, and make its own recommendations, which shall be submitted to the legislature and the governor for the first phase by December 15, 2026, and for the second phase by December 15, 2027. At least two meetings per year shall be fully virtual.

(6) Legislative members of the joint committee are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW [44.04.120](#). Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses by the senate or the house of

representatives if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization.

(7) The expenses of the joint committee must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Committee expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house of representatives executive rules committee, or their successor committees.