

**SB 6497-S - DIGEST**

(SUBSTITUTED FOR - SEE 2ND SUB)

Finds that statutorily granted judicial discretion in sentencing has been limited by appellate court decisions requiring jury findings prior to imposing sentences above the standard sentence ranges.

Finds that expanding the sentencing ranges is the most appropriate method of increasing judicial discretion while retaining commensurate and appropriate punishment for similarly situated offenders as well as assuring the frugal use of state and local government resources.

Declares an intent to provide judges with increased discretion and decrease the need to impose exceptional sentences. The legislature further intends that sentencing courts have the authority and power to adopt suitable processes of proceeding in cases where exceptional sentences are appropriate to the extent that such procedures are mandated by the United States Constitution or Washington state Constitution.