

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1060

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As of March 13, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to updating the weatherization statute to reflect evolving green building and energy conservation practices.

**Brief Description:** Updating the weatherization statute.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Local Government & Housing (originally sponsored by Representatives Lias, Walsh, Simpson, Ericks, Ormsby, Miloscia, Nelson, Rolfes, Conway, Wood, Kenney, Chase, Moeller and Upthegrove; by request of Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/23/09, 65-32.

**Committee Activity:** Environment, Water & Energy: 3/13/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, WATER & ENERGY

**Staff:** Jan Odano (786-7486)

**Background:** In 1987 the Legislature established the low-income residential weatherization program. This program provides services to improve the energy efficiency, durability, and health and safety of homes occupied by low-income households. Weatherization services include the installation of energy efficiency measures such as ceiling, wall, and floor insulation; closing heat-escaping gaps by caulking, weather stripping, or broken window replacement; heating system improvements; health and safety measures; and necessary repairs. These services save energy, reduce the energy costs for low-income households, and improve the comfort, health, and safety of the living environment.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (department) is charged with administering the program, soliciting proposals for low-income weatherization programs from potential sponsors, and adopting associated rules.

**Summary of Bill:** Definitions and operational requirements of the low-income weatherization program are modified.

The revisions to definitions include:

- authorizing the department to define low-income household provided the definition does not exceed 80 percent of the median household income;

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- modifying "sponsor" and "weatherizing agency" to allow tribal nations to qualify under both terms;
- changing "weatherization" to "sustainable residential weatherization or weatherization," which means activities that use funds administered by the department for at least one of the following: energy and resource conservation; energy efficiency improvements; repairs; indoor air quality improvements; health and safety improvements; and client education.

Funds administered by the department for authorized weatherization program activities may be used only for the preservation of a dwelling unit occupied by a low-income household and must, to the extent feasible, be used to support and advance sustainable technologies.

Sponsor proposals must provide that full levels of all cost-effective, structurally feasible, and sustainable weatherization materials, measures, and practices are utilized when a residence is weatherized. The department may allocate funds to proposals that identify and correct health and safety problems; achieve the greatest possible expected monetary and energy savings by low-income households and other energy consumers over the longest period of time; and leverage environmentally friendly sustainable technologies, practices, and designs.

The provisions requiring the department to ensure a balance of participation among different regions and household characteristics are revised to encourage the use of energy efficient and sustainable technologies. Priority for weatherization services must be directed to low-income households with incomes at or below 125 percent of the federally-established poverty level. The department, when adopting the rules for rented or leased residences, must ensure the benefits of weatherization assistance, including utility bill reduction and preservation of affordable housing stock.

**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: The statute was enacted in 1987 and these updates will allow the weatherization program to take advantage of new technologies and better utilize federal stimulus funding. The bill will allow programs to capitalize on sustainable technologies and will provide more flexibility for home improvements. It aligns income eligibility requirements to serve all low-income households while prioritizing services to the very low-income households.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Marie Sullivan, Steve Payne, Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development; Carrie Dolwick, NW Energy Coalition; Greg Provenzano, Columbia Legal Services.