S-3396.1

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**SENATE BILL 5644**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Wagoner and Frockt

AN ACT Relating to providing quality behavioral health co-response services; adding a new section to chapter 36.28A RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that behavioral health co-response has experienced a surge in popularity in Washington state in the past five years. The legislature recognizes the importance of training for those involved in co-responder programs to promote high standards within programs and to enhance the skills of those already working in this field. The purpose of this act is to develop a core curriculum relevant to first responders and behavioral health professionals working on co-response teams, to create ongoing learning opportunities for emerging and established co-response programs, and to develop the workforce to fill future co-responder hiring needs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 36.28A RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington state association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall partner with a statewide organization of first responders, behavioral health professionals, and project managers working in co-response programs to:

(a) Establish a co-responder learning academy in 2022 for individuals working in co-response programs to convene for training, networking, and sharing of best practices, including track offerings for different-sized jurisdictions and police-, fire-, and emergency medical services-based co-response programs;

(b) Establish four to six learning sites in Washington state with structured learning components and areas of instruction where individuals interested in co-response can spend a day learning with an experienced co-response team;

(c) Partner with the department of health to develop a certification specific to behavioral health professionals working in the co-response field, including completion of a core curriculum, observation of programs, and completion of a specified number of hours of field work, for the purpose of raising standards for co-response programs, encouraging interest in co-response programs, and promoting workforce development; and

(d) Report on progress and present workforce development recommendations specific to co-response programs to the governor and relevant committees of the legislature by June 30, 2023.

(2) To accomplish these goals the association shall hire a co-response training coordinator with consultation and consent from the statewide organization of first responders, behavioral health professionals, and project managers working in co-response programs specified in subsection (1) of this section. The coordinator shall work closely with this statewide organization and consult with a spectrum of co-response programs and other relevant entities such as the Washington state firefighters' association and the department of health.

**--- END ---**