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**SENATE BILL 5686**

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

**By** Senators McCune, Padden, and Wagoner

AN ACT Relating to improving department of corrections operations and oversight by transferring the office of corrections ombuds to the department of social and health services and designating public safety as the department of corrections highest duty; amending RCW 43.06C.020, 43.06C.040, 43.06C.060, 72.09.010, 9.94A.704, and 43.131.426; adding a new section to chapter 43.06C RCW; creating a new section; and repealing RCW 43.06C.030.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 43.06C.020 and 2018 c 270 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, there is hereby created an office of corrections ombuds within the ((~~office of the governor~~)) department of social and health services for the purpose of providing information to inmates and their families, representatives of inmates, department employees, and others regarding the rights of inmates; providing technical assistance to support inmate self-advocacy; promoting public awareness and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of inmates; identifying system issues and responses for the governor and the legislature to act upon; and ensuring compliance with relevant statutes, rules, and policies pertaining to corrections facilities, services, and treatment of inmates under the jurisdiction of the department.

((~~The ombuds reports directly to the governor and exercises his or her powers and duties independently of the secretary.~~))

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.06C RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department of social and health services shall designate, by a competitive bidding process, the nonprofit organization that will contract to operate the office. The contract must last for a period of two years and may be renewed at the end of the term. The department of social and health services shall select an organization that possesses, directly or through subcontracts, significant legal expertise, competence with mediation and alternative dispute resolution, and experience working within criminal justice and correctional environments. Other relevant experience may include, but is not limited to, addressing issues relating to chemical dependency treatment, disability and disability-related accommodation, respect for racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, and other civil rights and conditions issues. The selected organization must have experience and the capacity to communicate effectively regarding criminal justice issues with policymakers, stakeholders, and the general public, and must be prepared and able to provide all program and staff support necessary, directly or through subcontracts, to carry out all duties of the office.

(2) The organization and its subcontractors, if any, are not state agencies or departments, but instead are private, independent entities operating under contract with the state.

(3) The organization must be an objective and neutral entity that will impartially investigate complaints.

(4) The organization is subject to financial and other audits by the state auditor's office, and its employees must abide by the provisions of chapter 42.52 RCW.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.06C.040 and 2018 c 270 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The ombuds shall:

(a) Establish priorities for use of the limited resources available to the ombuds;

(b) Maintain a statewide toll-free telephone number, a collect telephone number, a website, and a mailing address for the receipt of complaints and inquiries;

(c) Provide information, as appropriate, to inmates, family members, representatives of inmates, department employees, and others regarding the rights of inmates;

(d) Provide technical assistance to support inmate participation in self-advocacy;

(e) Monitor department compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and policies as related to the health, safety, welfare, and rehabilitation of inmates;

(f) Monitor and participate in legislative and policy developments affecting correctional facilities;

(g) Establish a statewide uniform reporting system to collect and analyze data related to complaints received by the ombuds regarding the department;

(h) Establish procedures to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints;

(i) Establish procedures to gather stakeholder input into the ombuds' activities and priorities, which must include at a minimum quarterly public meetings;

(j) Submit annually to the governor's office, the legislature, and the statewide family council, by November 1st of each year, a report that includes, at a minimum, the following information:

(i) The budget and expenditures of the ombuds;

(ii) The number of complaints received and resolved by the ombuds;

(iii) A description of significant systemic or individual investigations or outcomes achieved by the ombuds during the prior year;

(iv) Any outstanding or unresolved concerns or recommendations of the ombuds; and

(v) Input and comments from stakeholders, including the statewide family council, regarding the ombuds' activities during the prior year; and

(k) Adopt and comply with rules, policies, and procedures necessary to implement this chapter.

(2)(a) The ombuds may initiate and attempt to resolve an investigation upon his or her own initiative, or upon receipt of a complaint from an inmate, a family member, a representative of an inmate, a department employee, or others, regarding ((~~any of the following that may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of inmates~~)):

(i) Abuse or neglect;

(ii) Department decisions or administrative actions;

(iii) Inactions or omissions;

(iv) Policies, rules, or procedures; or

(v) Alleged violations of law by the department that may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of inmates.

(b) Prior to filing a complaint with the ombuds, a person shall have reasonably pursued resolution of the complaint through the internal grievance, administrative, or appellate procedures with the department. However, in no event may an inmate be prevented from filing a complaint more than ninety business days after filing an internal grievance, regardless of whether the department has completed the grievance process. This subsection (2)(b) does not apply to complaints related to threats of bodily harm including, but not limited to, sexual or physical assaults or the denial of necessary medical treatment.

(c) The ombuds may decline to investigate any complaint as provided by the rules adopted under this chapter.

(d) If the ombuds does not investigate a complaint, the ombuds shall notify the complainant of the decision not to investigate and the reasons for the decision.

(e) The ombuds may not investigate any complaints relating to an inmate's underlying criminal conviction.

(f) The ombuds may not investigate a complaint from a department employee that relates to the employee's employment relationship with the department ((~~or the administration of the department, unless the complaint is related to the health, safety, welfare, and rehabilitation of inmates~~)).

(g) The ombuds must attempt to resolve any complaint at the lowest possible level.

(h) The ombuds may refer complainants and others to appropriate resources, agencies, or departments.

(i) The ombuds may not levy any fees for the submission or investigation of complaints.

(j) The ombuds must remain neutral and impartial and may not act as an advocate for the complainant or for the department.

(k) At the conclusion of an investigation of a complaint, the ombuds must render a public decision on the merits of each complaint, except that the documents supporting the decision are subject to the confidentiality provisions of RCW 43.06C.060. The ombuds must communicate the decision to the inmate, if any, and to the department. The ombuds must state its recommendations and reasoning if, in the ombuds' opinion, the department or any employee thereof should:

(i) Consider the matter further;

(ii) Modify or cancel any action;

(iii) Alter a rule, practice, or ruling;

(iv) Explain in detail the administrative action in question; ((~~or~~))

(v) Rectify an omission; or

(vi) Take any other action.

(l) If the ombuds so requests, the department must, within the time specified, inform the ombuds about any action taken on the recommendations or the reasons for not complying with the recommendations.

(m) If the ombuds believes, based on the investigation, that there has been or continues to be a significant inmate health, safety, welfare, or rehabilitation issue, the ombuds must report the finding to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature.

(n) Before announcing a conclusion or recommendation that expressly, or by implication, criticizes a person or the department, the ombuds shall consult with that person or the department. The ombuds may request to be notified by the department, within a specified time, of any action taken on any recommendation presented. The ombuds must notify the inmate, if any, of the actions taken by the department in response to the ombuds' recommendations.

(3) This chapter does not require inmates to file a complaint with the ombuds in order to exhaust available administrative remedies for purposes of the prison litigation reform act of 1995, P.L. 104-134.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.06C.060 and 2018 c 270 s 7 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Correspondence and communication with the office is confidential and must be protected as privileged correspondence in the same manner as legal correspondence or communication.

(2) The office shall establish confidentiality rules and procedures for all information maintained by the office.

(3) The ombuds shall treat all matters under investigation, including the identities of recipients of ombuds services, complainants, and individuals from whom information is acquired, as confidential, except as far as disclosures may be necessary to enable the ombuds to perform the duties of the office and to support any recommendations resulting from an investigation. Upon receipt of information that by law is confidential or privileged, the ombuds shall maintain the confidentiality of such information and shall not further disclose or disseminate the information except as provided by applicable state or federal law or as authorized by subsection (4) of this section. All records exchanged and communications between the office of the corrections ombuds and the department to include the investigative record are confidential and are exempt from public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW.

(4) To the extent the ombuds reasonably believes necessary, the ombuds:

(a) Must reveal information obtained in the course of providing ombuds services to prevent reasonably certain death or substantial bodily harm; and

(b) May reveal information obtained in the course of providing ombuds services to prevent the commission of a crime.

(5) If the ombuds believes it is necessary to reveal investigative records for any of the reasons outlined in ((~~section 4 of this act~~)) subsection (4) of this section, the ombuds shall provide a copy of what they intend to disclose to the department for review and application of legal exemptions prior to releasing to any other persons. If the ombuds receives personally identifying information about individual corrections staff during the course of an investigation that the ombuds determines is unrelated or unnecessary to the subject of the investigation or recommendation for action, the ombuds will not further disclose such information. If the ombuds determines that such disclosure is necessary to an investigation or recommendation, the ombuds will contact the staff member as well as the bargaining unit representative before any disclosure.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The office of the corrections ombuds is transferred to the department of social and health services.

(2)(a) All reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material in the possession of the office of the corrections ombuds shall be delivered to the custody of the department of social and health services. All funds, credits, or other assets held in connection with the powers, functions, and duties transferred shall be assigned to the department of social and health services.

(b) Any appropriations made to the office of the corrections ombuds shall, on the effective date of this section, be transferred and credited to the department of social and health services.

(c) If any question arises as to the transfer of any funds, books, documents, records, papers, files, equipment, or other tangible property used or held in the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties and functions transferred, the director of financial management shall make a determination as to the proper allocation and certify the same to the state agencies concerned.

(3) All rules and all pending business before the office of the corrections ombuds shall be continued and acted upon by the department of social and health services. All existing contracts and obligations shall remain in full force and shall be performed by the department of social and health services.

(4) The transfer of the powers, duties, and functions of the office of the corrections ombuds shall not affect the validity of any act performed before the effective date of this section.

(5) If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of the transfers directed by this section, the director of financial management shall certify the apportionments to the agencies affected, the state auditor, and the state treasurer. Each of these shall make the appropriate transfer and adjustments in funds and appropriation accounts and equipment records in accordance with the certification.

(6) The transfers to the department of social and health services in this section shall be used by the department to facilitate operation of the office of corrections ombuds by the nonprofit organization selected by the competitive bidding process outlined in section 2 of this act.

**Sec.**  RCW 72.09.010 and 1995 1st sp.s. c 19 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

It is the intent of the legislature to establish a comprehensive system of corrections for convicted law violators within the state of Washington to accomplish the following objectives.

(1) The ((~~system should~~)) highest duty of the department and the secretary is to ensure the public safety. The system should be designed and managed to provide the maximum feasible safety for the persons and property of the general public, the staff, and the inmates.

(2) The system should punish the offender for violating the laws of the state of Washington. This punishment should generally be limited to the denial of liberty of the offender.

(3) The system should positively impact offenders by stressing personal responsibility and accountability and by discouraging recidivism.

(4) The system should treat all offenders fairly and equitably without regard to race, religion, sex, national origin, residence, or social condition.

(5) The system, as much as possible, should reflect the values of the community including:

(a) Avoiding idleness. Idleness is not only wasteful but destructive to the individual and to the community.

(b) Adoption of the work ethic. It is the community expectation that all individuals should work and through their efforts benefit both themselves and the community.

(c) Providing opportunities for self improvement. All individuals should have opportunities to grow and expand their skills and abilities so as to fulfill their role in the community.

(d) Linking the receipt or denial of privileges to responsible behavior and accomplishments. The individual who works to improve himself or herself and the community should be rewarded for these efforts. As a corollary, there should be no rewards for no effort.

(e) Sharing in the obligations of the community. All citizens, the public and inmates alike, have a personal and fiscal obligation in the corrections system. All communities must share in the responsibility of the corrections system.

(6) The system should provide for prudent management of resources. The avoidance of unnecessary or inefficient public expenditures on the part of offenders and the department is essential. Offenders must be accountable to the department, and the department to the public and the legislature. The human and fiscal resources of the community are limited. The management and use of these resources can be enhanced by wise investment, productive programs, the reduction of duplication and waste, and the joining together of all involved parties in a common endeavor. Since most offenders return to the community, it is wise for the state and the communities to make an investment in effective rehabilitation programs for offenders and the wise use of resources.

(7) The system should provide for restitution. Those who have damaged others, persons or property, have a responsibility to make restitution for these damages.

(8) The system should be accountable to the citizens of the state. In return, the individual citizens and local units of government must meet their responsibilities to make the corrections system effective.

(9) The system should meet those national standards which the state determines to be appropriate.

**Sec.**  RCW 9.94A.704 and 2019 c 263 s 601 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Every person who is sentenced to a period of community custody shall report to and be placed under the supervision of the department, subject to RCW 9.94A.501.

(2)(a) The department shall assess the offender's risk of reoffense and may establish and modify additional conditions of community custody based upon the risk to community safety.

(b) Within the funds available for community custody, the department shall determine conditions on the basis of risk to community safety, and shall supervise offenders during community custody on the basis of risk to community safety and conditions imposed by the court. The secretary shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this subsection (2)(b).

(3) If the offender is supervised by the department, the department shall at a minimum instruct the offender to:

(a) Report as directed to a community corrections officer;

(b) Remain within prescribed geographical boundaries;

(c) Notify the community corrections officer of any change in the offender's address or employment;

(d) Pay the supervision fee assessment; and

(e) Disclose the fact of supervision to any mental health, chemical dependency, or domestic violence treatment provider, as required by RCW 9.94A.722.

(4) The department may require the offender to participate in rehabilitative programs, or otherwise perform affirmative conduct, and to obey all laws.

(5) If the offender was sentenced pursuant to a conviction for a sex offense or domestic violence, the department may:

(a) Require the offender to refrain from direct or indirect contact with the victim of the crime or immediate family member of the victim of the crime. If a victim or an immediate family member of a victim has requested that the offender not contact him or her after notice as provided in RCW 72.09.340, the department shall require the offender to refrain from contact with the requestor. Where the victim is a minor, the parent or guardian of the victim may make a request on the victim's behalf. This subsection is not intended to reduce the preexisting authority of the department to impose no-contact conditions regardless of the offender's crime and regardless of who is protected by the no-contact condition, where such condition is based on risk to community safety.

(b) Impose electronic monitoring. Within the resources made available by the department for this purpose, the department shall carry out any electronic monitoring using the most appropriate technology given the individual circumstances of the offender. As used in this section, "electronic monitoring" has the same meaning as in RCW 9.94A.030.

(6) The department may not impose conditions that are contrary to those ordered by the court and may not contravene or decrease court-imposed conditions.

(7)(a) The department shall notify the offender in writing of any additional conditions or modifications.

(b) By the close of the next business day after receiving notice of a condition imposed or modified by the department, an offender may request an administrative review under rules adopted by the department. The condition shall remain in effect unless the reviewing officer finds that it is not reasonably related to the crime of conviction, the offender's risk of reoffending, or the safety of the community.

(8) The department shall notify the offender in writing upon community custody intake of the department's violation process.

(9) The department may require offenders to pay for special services rendered including electronic monitoring, day reporting, and telephone reporting, dependent on the offender's ability to pay. The department may pay for these services for offenders who are not able to pay.

(10)(a) When an offender on community custody is under the authority of the board, the department shall assess the offender's risk of recidivism and shall recommend to the board any additional or modified conditions based upon the offender's risk to community safety and may recommend affirmative conduct or electronic monitoring consistent with subsections (4) through (6) of this section.

(b) The board may impose conditions in addition to court-ordered conditions. The board must consider and may impose department-recommended conditions. The board must impose a condition requiring the offender to refrain from contact with the victim or immediate family member of the victim as provided in subsection (5)(a) of this section.

(c) By the close of the next business day, after receiving notice of a condition imposed by the board or the department, an offender may request an administrative hearing under rules adopted by the board. The condition shall remain in effect unless the hearing examiner finds that it is not reasonably related to any of the following:

(i) The crime of conviction;

(ii) The offender's risk of reoffending;

(iii) The safety of the community;

(iv) The offender's risk of domestic violence reoffense.

(d) If the department finds that an emergency exists requiring the immediate imposition of additional conditions in order to prevent the offender from committing a crime, the department may impose such conditions. The department may not impose conditions that are contrary to those set by the board or the court and may not contravene or decrease court-imposed or board-imposed conditions. Conditions imposed under this subsection shall take effect immediately after notice to the offender by personal service, but shall not remain in effect longer than seven working days unless approved by the board.

(11) In setting, modifying, and enforcing conditions of community custody, the department shall be deemed to be performing a quasi‑judicial function.

(12) The department shall make every reasonable effort and prioritize staffing to pursue active warrants of offenders who have violated the terms of their supervision.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  RCW 43.06C.030 (Appointment of ombuds—Term—Other employees) and 2018 c 270 s 4 are each repealed.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.131.426 and 2018 c 270 s 11 are each amended to read as follows:

The following acts or parts of acts, as now existing or hereafter amended, are each repealed, effective July 1, 2029:

(1) RCW 43.06C.005 and 2018 c 270 s 1;

(2) RCW 43.06C.020 and 2022 c ... s 1 (section 1 of this act) & 2018 c 270 s 2;

(3) RCW 43.06C.010 and 2018 c 270 s 3;

(4) ((~~RCW 43.06C.030 and 2018 c 270 s 4~~)) RCW 43.06C.--- and 2022 c ... s 2 (section 2 of this act);

(5) RCW 43.06C.040 and 2022 c ... s 3 (section 3 of this act) & 2018 c 270 s 5;

(6) RCW 43.06C.050 and 2018 c 270 s 6;

(7) RCW 43.06C.060 and 2022 c ... s 4 (section 4 of this act) & 2018 c 270 s 7; and

(8) RCW 43.06C.070 and 2018 c 270 s 8.

**--- END ---**